

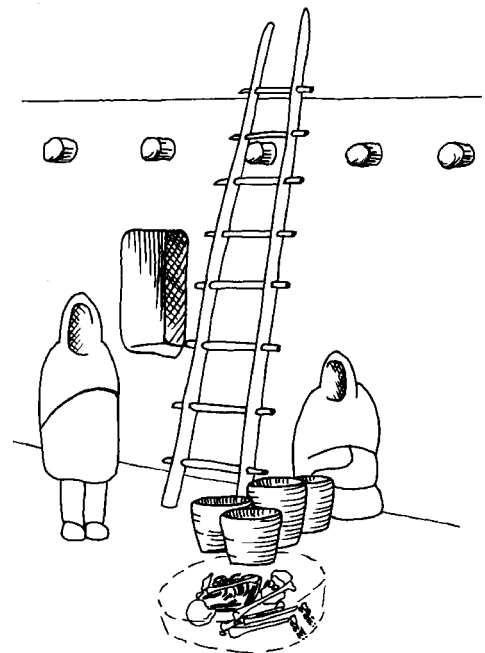


Social Memory, Identity, and Death: Anthropological Perspectives on Mortuary Rituals

Meredith S. Chesson, Editor

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Meredith S. Chesson
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Ian Kuijt
Susan Kus
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Anne Schiller



2001

Archeological Papers of the
American Anthropological Association Number 10

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Jay K. Johnson, General Series Editor

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**SOCIAL MEMORY, IDENTITY, AND DEATH:
ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MORTUARY RITUALS**

2001

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Social Memory, Identity, and Death: An Introduction

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The analysis of mortuary rituals provides a richly textured medium in which ethnographers and archaeologists examine the crafting of social memories and the assertion of individual and group identities in past and present communities throughout the world. From an archaeological perspective, mortuary practices represent the complex interplay of emotions, material culture, and social memories of the mourners and the deceased in the past, testified by the material remains of these ceremonies, namely grave goods, skeletal remains, and funerary structures (for examples, see Cannon 1989; Carr 1995; Chesson 1999, this volume; Dillehay 1993; Gillespie 2001; Kuijt 1996, this volume; McCafferty and McCafferty 1994; O'Shea 1996; Pearson 1999). From ethnographic accounts, we know that mortuary rituals provide a sensuous arena in which the dead are mourned, social memories are created and (re)asserted, social bonds are renewed, forged, or broken, and individuals make claims for individual identities and group memberships (for examples, see George 1996; Jing 1996; Kan 1989; Schiller 1997; Weiner 1976). Both ethnographic and archaeological studies clearly illustrate the intensely complex interplay between people's identities, emotions, experiences, and desires, the multiple webs of social structures, and the use of material culture in primary and secondary mortuary practices.¹

In this age of increasing specialization within the discipline of anthropology, it is unfortunate that relatively few ethnographers and archaeologists explicitly draw on each other's work to help in the analysis of mortuary practices in diverse temporal and geographic settings. Even more troubling, many ethnographers and archaeologists perceive archaeological and ethnographic analyses of mortuary practices to be mutually exclusive endeavors. For example, in a recent conversation with an ethnographer, I was assured that "mortuary" analysis was clearly the realm for archaeologists; ethnographers

dealt with "death." While this ethnographer may have been speaking facetiously to some extent, this comment reflects the increasingly prevalent tendency to define the practice of anthropology in terms of the divisive nature of the four fields, rather than in terms of the links between ethnography, linguistics, archaeology, and physical anthropology. This current volume is a response to those who envision the four fields of anthropology as mutually exclusive entities, and all the papers demonstrate the efficacy of a cross-field approach to analyzing rituals associated with death. The authors in this volume strive to engage both ethnographic and archaeological perspectives on mortuary practices, and to contribute to active interactions between researchers in the different fields of anthropology.

This volume focuses on the interdependence of crafting social memories and identities in mortuary practices, a subject that has received considerable attention from both archaeologists and ethnographers. The essays presented in this volume draw upon papers presented in a session at the Ninety-sixth Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Ian Kuijt and I organized this session, entitled "Social Memory, Identity, and Death: Intradisciplinary Perspectives on Mortuary Analysis," with the hope of exploring the links between archaeological and ethnographic approaches to mortuary rituals. This volume includes the expanded and refined papers from the 1997 session, as well as papers written by invited contributors. The powerful combination of ethnographic and archaeological research into mortuary practices in the same volume demonstrates the immense utility of cross-field studies within anthropology by highlighting the interconnections between the fields and illustrating the exciting benefits inherent in an active dialogue between archaeologists and ethnographers. As discussions of the utility of the four-field approach continue to be aired in journals, newsletters, and academic fac-

ulty meetings, the flowing of ideas and discussions contained in these papers emphasize the common interests across anthropological fields and represent how anthropologists can gain a more comprehensive understanding of human behavior and the maintenance and negotiation of life and relationships in communities through time and space.

Anthropological Approaches to Death and Mortuary Rituals

Over the past century, ethnographers and archaeologists have energetically examined the connections between mortuary rituals and societal structures. Beginning with Petrie's (1901, 1904) pioneering typological studies of pottery from grave contexts in Egypt and Hertz's (1960) astute ethnographic treatment of primary and secondary mortuary practices, archaeologists and ethnographers have focused on mortuary practices as viewing points from which to examine contemporary, historic, and prehistoric societies (for example, Binford 1972; Goldstein 1980; Jonaitis 1991; Lévi-Strauss 1983; Saxe 1970). Many of these earlier anthropological approaches to mortuary practices emphasized the description of the practices themselves; many ethnographers catalogued and interpreted the significances of the ritual actions, while archaeologists concentrated on the description of grave furniture, tomb construction, and skeletal remains.

More recently, ethnographers concerned with studies of death and mortuary rituals have been incorporating into their studies a heightened awareness of the issues of social memory and the creation and negotiation of identities (Bloch 1982; Bloch and Parry 1982; George 1996; Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997; Weiner 1976). These recent studies demonstrate how researchers have refined their theoretical and methodological frameworks for exploring the connection between societal structures and mortuary practices. Frequently, anthropologists use the descriptive approach as a foundation to explore issues of intensifying social inequalities, political development, the nature of ritual action and structures, cosmologies, kinship structures, networks of exchange and reciprocity, and gender. For example, Weiner's (1976:61) study of the Trobriand Islanders describes the mortuary ceremonies as "moments of spectacular visual communication. They serve as a vehicle for the financial and political assessment of each participant, and for an instant, through the use of such visual qualities as style, color, and space, they frame

the oppositional nature of relationships." Weiner's analysis highlights the key elements of performance, social drama, and material culture in mortuary practices, and the intensity of interpersonal interaction in mortuary contexts, in which relationships and social memories are strengthened, reassessed, and even shattered (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:6).

Archaeological approaches to mortuary practices have also demonstrated a refinement in the types of questions asked and methodological tools employed (see Gillespie 2001 for an excellent review of the theoretical developments). By necessity, archaeologists have always been interested in material culture and the built environment, in questions of style and space, as potential expressions of identity or societal structures. More recently, archaeologists have utilized ethnographers' awareness of how identities and social memories of both the living and the dead participants can be asserted, challenged, and renegotiated all within the context of mortuary ceremonies (Brown 1995; Cannon 1989; Chesson 1999, this volume; Dillehay 1993; Gillespie 2001; Hodder 1984; Joyce this volume; Kuijt this volume; McCafferty and McCafferty 1994; Meskell this volume; O'Shea 1996; Pearson 1999). For example, O'Shea's (1996) exhaustive analysis of the Bronze Age Maros mortuary complex displays a detailed consideration of the expression of identity with material culture by the dead and the living, and of how these different identities signify complex structures of relations of power and authority within these prehistoric communities.

Foundations for Dialogue: Data and Theory

Even from this cursory inspection of anthropological literature on mortuary studies, it is clear that ethnographers and archaeologists grapple with many of the same fundamental questions about what it means to be mortal and human, transients in a constantly changing world. Given the shared interest in mortuary behavior by archaeologists and ethnographers, it should come as no surprise that both sets of researchers often utilize the same data sets and ask the same questions in analyzing mortuary practices. In particular, they share four fundamental sets of data: treatment of the remains of the deceased; material culture worn, used, and carried by the living and the dead during the rites; the built environment (the context of the mortuary ceremonies, the funerary structure or monument); and the specific ceremonies and practices in both primary and secondary mortuary rituals. By necessity, archaeological inquiry places a heavy emphasis on the physical remains of hu-

man behavior, and in the case of mortuary practices in the past, these four categories of information are crucial to the reconstruction of life and death:

- The processing and elaboration of the remains of the deceased by the living, including cremation, defleshing, embalming, removal of skeletal elements, and adornment of the body using ochre, paint, textiles, and costume ornaments, which survive in the archaeological record;

- The deposition by the living of material culture with the deceased, such as vessels, textiles, costume ornaments, food, and other objects;

- The nature and scale of funerary monuments, which provide archaeologists with an important set of information in exploring death and social structures of past societies; and

- The differing patterns of skeletal remains, funerary structures, and material culture associated with primary and secondary mortuary practices.

For example, in Kuijt's (this volume) analysis of Pre-Pottery Neolithic mortuary practices in the southern Levant, his research focused on all four of these categories. The physical remains of mortuary practices at Pre-Pottery Neolithic B sites, such as 'Ain Ghazal, Basta, and Jericho, demonstrate that Pre-Pottery Neolithic B people practiced skull removal: reopening graves, removing the skulls, and reburying them in subfloor or courtyard contexts in secondary ceremonies. While most skulls were undecorated, before reburial many skulls were painted, plastered to recreate human features such as eyes, eyebrows, ears, and noses, and decorated with shell inlays. Most skulls were reburied in groups of three (or multiples of three) in pits in courtyard contexts, where multiple people from the community could have participated in the ceremony. From these physical remains, Kuijt suggests how the creation of social memories and assertion of group identities may have played important roles in the formation of these early agricultural communities.

Ethnographers have documented these same categories of data in mortuary ceremonies throughout the historic and contemporary world, identifying patterns of human behavior that transcend the archaeological past and the ethnographic present. For example, in Madagascar Feeley-Harnik (1989) has documented the wrapping and rewrapping of bodies and skeletal remains in particular textiles, the construction of ironwood tombs, and the inclusion of insignia or ornaments of authority as fundamental elements in secondary mortuary rites. The focus on material culture and the built environment in archaeological and ethnographic studies emphasizes the

fundamental links between these two anthropological approaches to studying the creation, maintenance, and contesting of identities and social memory during the memorialization of the dead.

Counterpoint of Theoretical Issues in Ethnography and Archaeology

On the basis of these shared data sets, ethnographers and archaeologists examine similar types of anthropological issues, including the nature of group and individual identities, the fundamental cosmological structures of society, the structuring forces of the community, including kinship, hierarchies, and gender ideologies, and the nature of ritual action by individual nonspecialists, ritual practitioners, and groups. For example, in recent literature archaeologists have striven to refine the concepts of agency, personhood, structure, and practice in relation to mortuary analysis, drawing particularly from Bourdieu's (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Gillespie 2001; McCall 1999). Practice theory continues to be a current framework for ethnographic research (e.g., George 1996). While it is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a synthesis of all theoretical approaches employed by archaeologists and ethnographers, I want to focus on certain themes from mortuary research that resonate powerfully in both ethnographic and archaeological contexts. Specifically, these themes include:

- Mortuary ceremonies, both primary and secondary, as public arenas for communication and assessment of individuals, social groups, and social relationships;

- Adornment of bodies and speech acts, and the assertion of identities and social memories through performance and material culture;

- The nature of "personhood," identity, social memory, and social structures, including the nature of "social death" and "biological death";

- Rituals as risky ventures, with the chance to fail or succeed, and the susceptibility of performance and the recreation of ritual to possibilities of creation and change;

- The nature of emotional response, involvement, and expression in any mortuary practice;

- The awakening and (re)construction of social memories in ritual context; and

- The nature of lived experience in mortuary ceremonies and in studying mortuary ceremonies.

I argue that these seven issues are crucial to both archaeological and ethnographic explorations and analyses of mortuary practices. I will briefly review how ethnographers and archaeologists have examined these themes

in their research into mortuary practices in the past and the present, drawing on works from within and outside of this volume.

Archaeologists and ethnographers have long recognized the public nature of mortuary ceremonies, particularly secondary rites, and how these ceremonies offer arenas for communicating and assessing group and individual identities and social memories (cf. George 1996; Gillespie 2001; Kuijt 1996, this volume; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997, this volume; Weiner 1976). Weiner's (1976) description and analysis of secondary mortuary rituals in the Trobriand Islands explores the nature of these ceremonies in asserting individual and community identities in public contexts. In these ceremonies, mourners' identities and affiliations are expressed publicly through the level and nature of their participation in the ceremonies, including choice of personal adornment, degree of involvement throughout the cycle of rites, and contribution of goods in reciprocal relationships. Similarly, Kuijt (1996, this volume) investigates the nature and scale of secondary mortuary rituals, particularly skull and statue caching in courtyard areas in the early Neolithic villages of the southern Levant. He convincingly argues for a strong link between these community-wide skull caching ceremonies and the architectural and skeletal evidence in the assertion of an egalitarian, house-oriented ritual system within the early Neolithic communities.

The issue of adornment offers a particularly potent link between archaeological and ethnographic research, with its focus on how people use material culture in dressing themselves and in their actions (cf. Feeley-Harnik 1989; George 1996; Hollimon 1997; Jonaitis 1991; Joyce 1999, this volume). During mortuary ceremonies people adorn themselves and the dead with material culture that reflects the complex webs of relationships between the dead, the living, and the community as a whole. In George's (1996) extraordinary analysis of headhunting rituals in *mappurondo* communities in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, he reminds us that material culture used to dress and adorn the body in ritual contexts enacts the powerful and empowering process of assessment: "Worn on and around the contours and features of the body, adornment opens up a radiant and stylized surface where the strivings of self and community become fused. No mere aesthetic fill, adornment is key to the politics of envy and emulation" (George 1996:144). In the context of the headhunting rituals, which signal the end of the yearly period of mourning in *mappurondo* communities, George demonstrates how adornment of the body, in

costume ornaments, ritual objects, and pigments, facilitates the assertion of personal and collective identities and social memories of what it means to be a member of the community. Joyce's (1999, this volume) study of Formative period burials at the site of Tlatilco, Mexico, deftly analyzes the patterning of objects associated with the individuals buried at the site. In her analysis she explores why different types of items may have been placed with the dead during mortuary ceremonies, and what these items reflect about the dead, the living, and relationships between the living and the dead. She proposes that archaeologists must acknowledge that the burials we excavate resulted from a complex set of practices that began long before the deceased individual was buried and the mortuary rituals were enacted. She urges archaeologists to consider burials as the intersection of individual experiences and multiple processes of the formation of social identities throughout a person's life. Ultimately, by exploring how the living adorned the dead and themselves, her research demonstrates how people crafted and celebrated the memory of their deceased loved ones in this early Formative village.

Drawing on the concept of adornment, archaeologists and ethnographers have approached mortuary practices as potential insights into the creation and assertion of identity, the nature of "personhood," and the expression of societal structures of status, authority, rank, gender, and collective groups (Binford 1972; Bloch 1982; Bloch and Parry 1982; Brown 1995; Cannon 1989; Chesson this volume; Gillespie 2001; Hodder 1984; Hollimon this volume; Joyce 1999, this volume; Kan 1989; Kuijt 1996, this volume; McCafferty and McCafferty 1994; Meskell 1999, this volume; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Pearson 1999; O'Shea 1996; Raharijaona and Kus this volume). Both ethnographic and archaeological researchers have extensively addressed the idea of "personhood" in mortuary contexts, recognizing the distinction between "biological death" and "social death" and how these concepts hold important implications for the death of a member of a community (cf. Bloch 1982; Gillespie 2001). Many researchers document how primary and secondary mortuary rituals enact a series of stages in which a person's biological death is followed by his or her social death, in which the individual leaves the living and successfully joins the community of ancestors (Feeley-Harnik 1989; Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). In addition to fulfilling the necessary steps in an individual's life history (including their death), mortuary ceremonies, with their public nature and as an arena for assessing relationships, identities, and social memories, can enact a powerful

integrative process for the community (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:149).

Kan's (1989) analysis of the Tlingit potlatch demonstrates the powerful unifying force inherent in secondary mortuary rites. In his portrayal and examination of the nineteenth-century potlatch, he notes that the community (re)created the social order in the context of mortuary rituals, drawing on the power of a strong ancestral ideology. Kan (1989:288) describes that "in their mortuary rites the Tlingit transformed death from a threat to the social order into the major opportunity for strengthening it and enhancing it." Tlingit funerals reconstituted the dead individual into a resource for the living, separating the perishable, polluted elements of the individual from the immortal, powerful elements that joined the ancestors and strengthened the living community. Kan's analysis emphasizes the relationship of the dead individual to the living, how the person's death potentially affects the relationships within the living community, and how mortuary practices directly address the tensions caused by a death within the community.

As part and parcel of the issue of identity and mortuary practices, several researchers have acknowledged the importance of recognizing the diversity of social positions of people participating in mortuary ceremonies. Each person, with ties to different social groups that often pursue competing interests, approaches his or her role in any given mortuary ceremony from a different perspective or position, and must negotiate these often complex ties to various factions (e.g., Kan 1989; Meskell 1999). This recognition underlies many critiques of the traditional archaeological approach to mortuary practices, exemplified by the oft-cited Binford-Saxe approach (Binford 1972; Saxe 1970). This approach has been justifiably critiqued recently (Brown 1995; Cannon 1989; Gillespie 2001; Hodder 1984; Joyce this volume; Meskell 1999, this volume; Pearson 1999), and archaeological mortuary analyses have profited from these critiques and discussions on the link between identity and mortuary remains. Meskell's analysis (1999, this volume) of the mortuary remains from the New Kingdom site of Deir el Medina, Egypt, represents the fruits of such intense critical evaluation and discussion. Drawing on cultural, archaeological, and textual data, Meskell argues that it is possible to explore the issues of identity and emotion associated with death in an archaeological context. Combining information from texts, such as attitudes toward the body and selfhood, with archaeological data from the mortuary complex at the site, she describes how, in Egyptian belief systems, individual selves persisted after death. With the five essential components of a multi-

ply constituted identity (name, shadow, personal magic, vital force, and character of the individual), individuals transcended death and acted as intentional and powerful agents for the living, creating links between the living and dead members of the community. This transcendence of death was reflected in family tombs in which the living and the dead maintained contact during family visits, regular offerings, and festivals. Such practices inextricably bound together people through life and death and held important implications for the creation of a collective social memory, memorialization, and the creation of identities.

The creation and recreation of mortuary rituals are not immune to the risks of any other set of ritual practices. As mentioned above, mortuary ceremonies enact powerful forces affecting community unity, individual and group identities, and ultimately the continued survival of the living community based on the creation of social memories of the past and the future. With so much potency and potentially destructive implications, mortuary ceremonies run tremendous risks if they fail to accomplish their goals (George 1996; Jing 1996; Schiller 1997, this volume). Metcalf and Huntington (1991:6) argue that "although we do not doubt that rituals are invariably caught up in relations of power, what is overlooked...is the uncertainty of the outcomes. Rituals may make a show of power, but they run the same risk as other shows: They may fail." For example, Anne Schiller describes the fascinating process of crafting a national identity and of creating a social universe by constructing mortuary rituals among the Ngaju in Central Kalimantan. She documents the events of 1996, in which a group of Ngaju villagers, led by a group of indigenous religionists, conducted a secondary mortuary ceremony, the largest held in the region in peoples' memories. Schiller describes the process of intense negotiation and compromise involved in the creation of a set of rituals for the ceremony, the construction of the ironwood complex, and the presentation of a cohesive "authentic Ngaju identity" to the national and global audiences. She deftly explores how the ceremony's sponsors combined traditional and nontraditional aspects of material culture to represent their particular vision of Ngaju identity, to foster social memories of the past and present, and to address key facets of the richly textured past and the increasingly global future. Underlying her analysis is the sometimes overwhelming fear of the ritual practitioners in view of the risks they were taking: that in creating new ritual traditions, they may fail, anger the ancestors, and thus endanger their survival in a sometimes hostile world.

Change through time is one of the hallmarks of archaeological research, and many researchers have investigated diachronic change in mortuary practices as offering potential insights into changing societal structures (Chesson this volume; Kuijt 1996; Kus and Raharijaona this volume). Drawing on archaeological data from an early urban community in the Early Bronze Age of the southern Levant, I have explored how living members of a community mapped individual and group identities onto themselves and the deceased in the creation of social memories (Chesson 1999, this volume). My analysis links the complex interplay between grave goods, the nature and timing of the memorial ceremonies, and the biological sex of individual(s) in an archaeological skeletal population with the powerful changes in household structures, systems of kinship, and interaction between women, men, and children during the first period of urbanization at the Early Bronze Age settlement of Bab edh-Dhra', Jordan. Dynamic changes in mortuary practices through time at Bab edh-Dhra', specifically the shift from shaft tomb burials to charnel houses, were associated with the transition from a nonsedentary life-style to settled life in a fortified town, and a subsequent return to nonurban living. This research demonstrates that each of these profound shifts in life-style involved fundamental changes in the societal bonds of the community, particularly structures of kinship, and that the process of urbanization and ruralization transformed the relationships of gendered individuals within the shifting structures of kinship, Houses, and broader community memories.

The nature of an individual's participation and expression of emotions at mortuary ceremonies often reflects the complex relationship between societal strictures and a person's obligations to the deceased and his or her kin, as well as obligations to the living participant's web of social, economic, and political ties (George 1996; Kan 1989:294–95; Metcalf and Huntington 1991:61; Rosaldo 1984). A particular society's conceptions of propriety, duty, and beliefs about death shape and guide the expression of emotions at mortuary ceremonies. Metcalf and Huntington (1991:61) rightly caution anthropologists that experience and sensitivity are necessary to successfully deal with emotions in any mortuary analysis. With emotional expression clearly presenting ethnographers with a thorny issue in their treatment of mortuary rites in any contemporary community, archaeologists analyzing mortuary practices in deep prehistory face even greater challenges. Nevertheless several archaeologists skillfully confront this situation, imparting emotions to their reconstructed people burying their dead (Joyce 1999, this volume; Meskell 1999, this volume). As Kan (1989:294) notes, "No matter how important their vari-

ous sociopolitical functions are, mortuary rites must deal with fundamental cognitive and emotional predicaments confronting humankind." As an underlying commonality, all people in the past, present, and future must deal with these cognitive and emotional challenges of mortality, and recently many archaeologists have acknowledged this importance of emotions as an integral element in mortuary rituals.

Mortuary rituals commemorate the life of the deceased, as well as the past life of the community. At the same time, commemoration clearly presents a picture of how life should be in the future, tying social memories of the past to the immediate future of the community in mourning (George 1996). George (1996:200) describes commemoration as a ritual action that touches the past, future, and present simultaneously: "And although we may associate commemoration with recollection and looking backward, it is also prospective—it offers a structure of anticipation. Memory—as a form of sociality and as a form of something remembered—is kept in motion." The subject of social memory and commemoration has received substantial attention in ethnographic and archaeological contexts (e.g., Dillehay 1993 and references therein; Jing 1996). Jing's (1996) *Temple of Memories* provides a good example of how a community's past, present, and future are intimately tied to social memories. In his focus on the village of Dachuan, a close-knit community of approximately 3500 people, Jing explores the devastating community memories of the destruction of family tombs, the deaths during a tremendous famine, and the reworking of mourning rituals during the Maoist era. As a foundation to his discussion, he examines structures influencing why and how certain deceased individuals are remembered or forgotten, and how the present and future survival of the community is intimately tied to these memories.

Archaeologists rely on the material remains of mortuary practices to understand how people commemorated the dead and crafted social memories of individuals and groups. Many archaeologists have addressed the issues of social memory in mortuary rituals (Chesson this volume; Dillehay 1993; Gillespie 2001; Joyce 1998, 1999, this volume; Kuijt this volume; Meskell 1999, this volume). Dillehay's (1993) volume *Tombs for the Living* provides an extensive exploration of commemoration in prehistoric and historic Andean communities. This collection of essays powerfully demonstrates how commemoration of the dead and the (re)creation of traditional practices link the past and the future in the physical monuments and the memories associated with individuals and communities.

Ethnographers bring to their mortuary analysis a keen appreciation for the nature of experience in shaping peoples' and communities' lives (George 1996; Jackson 1989; Rosaldo 1984). They acknowledge the primacy of peoples' actions in the present and the past, which ultimately shape peoples' lives (Jackson 1989). Rosaldo's (1984) reanalysis of Ilongot headhunting in light of his own devastating loss provides one of the most eloquent and powerful essays on acknowledging lived experience as an important element to anthropological analysis. Recently, archaeologists have confronted the challenge of understanding people's lives in the past through the lens of lived experience. Kus (1997:209–10) eloquently encourages archaeologists to recognize this connection between the ethnographic present, the archaeological record, and people as “sensuous human practice,” in which

meaning is embedded in cultural materials, is crafted by experience, both ordinary and extraordinary, and is grafted onto body and soul. This material nature of symbols whose meaning for the individual is produced, at least in part, by a slow and persistent sedimentation of experience, means that such symbols are not easily coopted. Such symbols are based on a powerful mix, if not imbroglia, of abundant and redundant metonyms of daily routine and dramatic metaphors of ritual and personal experiences that carry further entailments for thought and action. Consequently issues of local knowledge are not trivial and the ideological manipulation of symbols and experience...is neither easy nor straightforward but, once manipulated, can become incredibly persuasive.

Kus argues that in approaching the archaeological record from this perspective, archaeologists enhance their visions of the past, imbuing their reconstructions with the complexity inherent in human lives.

Future Directions for Dialogue

Clearly, from this discussion, ethnographers and archaeologists utilize similar types of data and theoretical frameworks in their analyses to explore very complex structures and behaviors in modern and past human communities. Within this scholarly overlap of approaches, ethnographers and archaeologists can offer important insights to each other. Archaeologists contribute a strong appreciation for the expression of societal structures (of change, compliance, resistance, coping mechanisms, and authority) in material culture and the built environment. Furthermore, in documenting the material residues of past behaviors, they are keenly aware of how different peoples treat death and mortality on the scales of the individual and group. Patterns of material culture and architecture

offer an archaeological foundation for reconstructing societal structures for the dead and the living in the community.

The nature of the archaeological approach involves the crucial element of time depth, often associated with successful and failed attempts by people to maintain social structures and lifeways in their communities. In examining how patterns of material culture and the built environment change over time as people endeavor to maintain or create new societies, archaeologists can gain a sense of how particular communities altered and how world views and social structures shifted through time, and can posit potential explanations for these developments. The archaeological awareness of time depth and change plays a fundamental role in understanding human communities in the past and can be an integral element in understanding contemporary societies.

Ethnographers approach mortuary analysis with unique insights into the importance of lived experience in shaping peoples' and communities' identities, memories, and practices. Ethnographers have access to living participants, who can offer their own views on emotions, adornment, rituals of commemoration, and the creation of social memories. Ultimately ethnographers offer archaeologists a richly textured world of analogy, from which archaeologists can interpret and reconstruct the past.

In both archaeological and ethnographic contexts, primary and secondary mortuary rituals embody the complicated interplay between peoples' experience, desires, and social structures, and the use of material culture and the built environment. The vessels and objects placed in mortuary contexts hold multiple significances, evoking richly textured memories and powerful meanings of their creation and use in the contexts of origin, household, settlement, and tomb. Ultimately, the patterning that we observe in mortuary contexts may reflect several meanings at any one time; as anthropologists, we must appreciate, and even enjoy, this complexity as we attempt to interpret and understand the ethnographic present and archaeological past of human communities.

Conclusions

As illustrated by this volume, the study of mortuary practices and rituals provides anthropologists with rich and varied insights into a community's conceptualization of mortality, social memory, and relationships between individuals. While clearly not a comprehensive exploration of mortuary rituals or the creation of social memories and identities, these papers explore the complex methodological and theoretical challenges involved in

the analysis of death, ritual, and memorialization. This volume illustrates the similarities of approaches and challenges encountered by ethnographers and archaeologists in exploring these issues. Both groups of researchers concentrate on material culture, the built environment, and ritual action as fundamental elements in the formation and assertion of individual and group identities and social memories.

These authors offer the foundation for rewarding dialogues between archaeologists and ethnographers. In this time of increasing specialization in anthropology, and the shift away from a four-field approach, this volume demonstrates the efficacy of intradisciplinary research and dialogue. This rich collection of archaeological and ethnographic case studies of death, identity, and social memory illustrates how much archaeologists can learn from ethnographers, and ethnographers from archaeologists. Dialogues such as these make us better anthropologists and bring us closer to acknowledging, understanding, and representing the wondrous contradictions and complexities of life in human societies of the past and present.

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Note

1. Several researchers have identified many of the key characteristics of and distinctions between primary and secondary mortuary ceremonies (Bloch 1982; Chesson 1999; Hertz 1960; Kuijt 1996; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Pearson 1999). Primary rites involve the immediate set of activities and behaviors following the death of a member of a community. These rituals

may include the processing of the body in preparation for interment, feasting, gatherings, formal and informal mourning rites, and the initial placement of the body or remains in the primary depositional context. All of these rites occur during the days or sometimes weeks immediately following the death. Secondary rituals, on the other hand, involve activities and ceremonies months or even years after the death, in which the living memorialize the dead as an integral process in repairing the rent in the social fabric of the community. These rites often involve the transport or modification of the remains of the deceased, and can also include the elaboration of the funerary monument or receptacle in which the remains are housed. These ceremonies are planned in advance to ensure cooperation and participation of a great number of people from within and outside of the community.

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Section One

Death and Collective Social Memories



Burying the Dead at Tlatilco: Social Memory and Social Identities

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Every burial that archaeologists excavate resulted from a complex sequence of practices that were initiated, not with the death of the person or persons who were interred, but long before, as their social identities were shaped and their individual experiences linked them to others through webs of kin and non-kin relationships. Burials are thus complex intersections of processes of formation of social identities. Burials and the mortuary rituals that accompanied their creation were also intersections of the formation of social memory, media through which social identities gained greater or lesser degrees of shared currency and temporal persistence. Taking these perspectives on ancient burials and mortuary rituals as an entry point into their understanding leads to very different approaches toward archaeological data. Using the rich documents provided by burials excavated at the central Mexican Formative period site of Tlatilco, in this chapter I explore how examining the place of burials in the creation of social identity and social memory shifts archaeological practice. I trace a trajectory from describing statistical trends in interments of female individuals to discussing the particular lives of women who lived, died, and were buried at this ancient village. I argue that neither perspective alone is sufficient. Each approach complements the other, but without the particularistic examination, burials as social occasions—with all their experiential aspects—will simply be lost under the weight of their decontextualization.

Archaeology has a long history of privileging mortuary analyses. The systematic exploration of burials as reflections of the social status and role of the deceased (Binford 1971; Saxe 1970; cf. Brown 1995) has been challenged by approaches treating burials as masking, rather than reflecting, social status (e.g., Pearson 1982). Running consistently through all of these approaches is

a more-or-less intuitive sense that burials should be heavily weighted with meaning because they were formed under the pressure of one of the most significant transformations in the human life course. At the same time, mortuary analyses are one of the classic sites for the expression of archaeological anxiety about the impossibility of ever knowing anything about the past with any certainty. Often these doubts are expressed within the bounds of the same texts. Burials with the most complex treatment and largest number of accompanying artifacts may be described with statistical certainty as those of societal elites, while when the burials in question are those of infants or young children, the same inference may be questioned (Brown 1981, 1995:8; Larsen 1995:249–50).

As Susan Kus (1992) has perhaps most eloquently argued, something fundamental to the living process of interring and memorializing the dead is missing when archaeologists come to interpret the final remains found within archaeological sites; the emotions, sights, smells, sounds, and experiential aspects of mortuary rites are rarely systematically considered as part of the forces structuring the final disposition of the dead. That absence in archaeological analyses is particularly unfortunate because it deprives us of a concern with burials as social practices by the living through which enduring social memory is created, through which everyday and individualistic occurrences are transformed into powerful common experiences that bind survivors together in new social forms (cf. George 1996:186–200; Kan 1989:181–96). “Representational” (following Barrett 1994) accounts of burials treat them as simple residues of events that had preceded their creation, mere traces of a past in the past. John Barrett (1994:87–90) rightly notes that representational approaches fail to acknowledge the creation of the past in the present through the active

intervention of archaeologists/authors. He suggests that, as archaeologists accept their role in interpretation, they come to occupy a place in a process of meaning-making not unlike that of the past actors whose actions produced the material residues we recover, who were also engaged not simply in reflecting what was, but in creating and recreating social relations through the use of material media. This perspective transforms the role of the archaeologist and, I would suggest, provides an impetus for us to seek to produce more and different kinds of knowledge from the material traces we document.

I suggest that ancient burials can be viewed as particularly charged sites where living survivors inscribed the dead into social memory in particular ways, as part of an ongoing process of spinning webs of social relations between themselves and others (Barrett 1994:94; Kuijt this volume; Meskell this volume; cf. Bloch and Parry 1982; Kan 1989:125–77; Raharijaona and Kus this volume; Schiller this volume; Weiner 1976:85–90; Woodburn 1982). As Nancy Munn (1986:164) writes, “Death itself initiates only a *physical* dissolution of the body...death dissolves neither the intersubjective amalgam that constitutes the *bodily person* and forms the ground of each self, nor the intersubjective connections between others built on and condensed within the deceased’s person” (original emphasis). The existing biographies of the deceased were raw material available for the creation of social memory and social meaning, and the way that mortuary rituals were conducted and burial settings constructed extended those already established social histories.

We can view burials, then, as episodes in unfolding stories. Traditional archaeological practice treats the particularity of burials as noise to be filtered out in pursuit of regularities. As literally hundreds of studies have shown, regularities are there, and can be discovered through statistical examination or simply by observing patterns of presence and absence of specific features. We may argue that the regularities of mortuary rituals were one of the ways ancient societies were structured (in Giddens’s [1979:62–66, 69–73, 1984:1–14] sense) through practice.

But the grain of structure is broad and ultimately fails to encompass the full power that mortuary rites would have had as embodied performances within which social actors reworked their emotional, social, and personal ties to those around them with whom they were connected through the deceased. Archaeological burial populations provide an unparalleled opportunity to explore not only the broad regularities of structuration but

also the finer variation of individual practices, in ways that enhance and, I argue, improve the realism of our present accounts of the past.

Life and Death at Tlatilco

In order to illustrate my argument, I undertake here an exercise in reanalysis of my own work on more than two hundred published burials from the Highland Central Mexican site of Tlatilco (Joyce 1999). Tlatilco was exposed to modern archaeology accidentally through the excavations of brickworkers in the area of modern Mexico City. Archaeologists from Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) undertook documentation of the chance-exposed burials and more extensive deliberate excavation of other parts of the site (Piña Chan 1958; Porter 1953; García Moll et al. 1991). Perhaps because the original discoveries at Tlatilco were informal, the site was originally presented as a cemetery, and even the more scientific excavations were geared primarily to documenting burials. However, as the INAH excavators and later analysts of the original burials have noted, features at the site that were visible in the walls of excavated units indicate that the burials were placed within the confines of a poorly preserved village of perishable houses, with house yards containing bell-shaped storage pits, sometimes used secondarily for burials.

A preliminary cluster analysis found that adult female burials from Tlatilco contained the most pottery and that nonpottery items were found more often in adult male or juvenile burials (Serra and Sugiura 1987). A statistical cluster of burials composed of individuals of mixed age and sex shared the use of iron-ore mirrors, jade belts, jade ear ornaments, and “rock-crystal” beads, along with certain elaborate ceramic vessels. In a more extended statistical analysis, Paul Tolstoy (1989) defined consistent rankings reflected in the quality and quantity of objects included in a burial, the depth and preparation of the grave, and the position of the body. He identified iron-ore mirrors, necklaces, and greenstone and shell objects as indicators of the top rank of a social hierarchy. He concluded that not all of the variability in the burial population could be explained simply as due to the reflection of individual rank: “The nature of these objects and their diverse patterns of occurrence suggest that the denotation of rank was not their exclusive function...Though consistent in the ranking they suggest for individual graves, these indicators do not exhibit uniformly strong associations with one another. This suggests that other important and, in part, hidden factors contribute to their distributions” (Tolstoy 1989:109–12).

The elucidation of possible “hidden factors” contributing to the differences among burials at Tlatilco has been the object of my subsequent work on these data (Joyce 1996, 1998a, 1999, 2001:chapter 2, In press a, In press b).

This work has been based on the desire to produce an account of this past society more in line with ethnographically observed social realities, where some individuals have higher status than others, where status and prerogatives change throughout life, and where the possibilities for social action are always unpredictably complex. To do this, I argue, we must consider not only regularities but also variation: the general practices whose conformity suggests intent by the living to bury in the manner of Tlatilco, as well as the distinctive actions that testify that each burial was itself an act of structuration through which social memory was formed and reformed.

The Mourning Community: Spatial Clusters and Social Groups

I have previously demonstrated that much of the variation between Tlatilco burials can be accounted for statistically as a consequence of their location in spatial clusters (Joyce 1999). Spatial clustering is evident on the map of burials at the site (Figure 2.1). Within spatial clusters, burials tend to share the same orientation or have perpendicular orientations, a characteristic that may result from something as simple as aligning burials placed below house floors or in house yards with house or yard walls. The size of these clusters is consistent with the dimensions of the only contemporary houses known from the period (e.g., at nearby Coapexco: Tolstoy 1989:90–91). A speculative overlay of such possible house boundaries can be mapped on the clusters of burials from Tlatilco (Figure 2.2), assuming that the orientation of burials followed house walls and that documented bell-shaped pits were outside the dwellings, as they were elsewhere in contemporary Mexico (e.g., San Jose Mogote: Flannery and Winter 1976; Winter 1976). Two groups of orientations evident in these trial house compounds (compare Figures 2.2 and 2.3) roughly correspond to clusters with burials containing the earliest and latest pottery vessels (Tolstoy 1989), perhaps representing as much as two centuries of remodeling of houses in the same general locations.

I propose that these spatial clusters of burials are more than arbitrary units. They represent the residue from specific sequences of activities within the bounds of a dwelling space, presumably by persons with social rights to be and act in that location. Tolstoy (1989) suggested that two moieties were represented at the site by distinct

burial orientations. He argued that rich burials within different burial clusters, sharing a common orientation, could perhaps be understood as persons who were locally born, and hence more privileged in death. I liken the people engaged within these spatial settings in the practice of mortuary ritual to members of social Houses (after Lévi-Strauss 1982:172–87, 1987:151–96; see Joyce 1999, 2000, 2001; Joyce and Gillespie 2000). As persons who recognized each other as having common histories embodied in the House compound, and who exercised rights through the House, the people of the Houses of Tlatilco held among their obligations the proper treatment of the dead, through whom the living were connected to their own ancestors and the members of other Houses.

The repeated placement of burials in the same spatial clusters ensured that later burials would sometimes disturb earlier ones. Treatment of the dead was accordingly an ongoing process, involving the reincorporation of human skeletal remains in mortuary and other ritual practices, not ending with initial interment. The concentration of multiple skulls in pits is an instance of such secondary treatment. Certain social practices would have ensured that such reincorporation took place predictably: placement in a marked location, such as a previously defined bell-shaped pit or more shallow burial, for example. Secondary treatment of skeletal remains is associated with spatial clusters of burials that most likely indicate former locations of individual House compounds occupied for multiple generations. Reworking of the same localities for new burials may have helped reinforce the continuity evident in other aspects of burial practice, with the rediscovered treatment of previous interments inspiring similar treatment of the newly dead.

General mortuary practices that were reiterated within some clusters represent the repeated actions of residents of these clusters. They included treatment of the grave with red pigment, interment of the deceased wearing imperishable costume ornaments, and incorporation within the grave of the raw materials and by-products of obsidian working. Each of these burial characteristics resulted from localized mortuary practices that distinguished some clusters from others, emphasizing identity through time among the dead and, through the dead, among the living.

My account of the regularities in the Tlatilco burials, then, is based fundamentally on the idea that active social agents living in conditions of intimacy were responsible for the repeated primary burial, and secondary treatment, of deceased members of their own social group. Their freedom of action in these mortuary rites

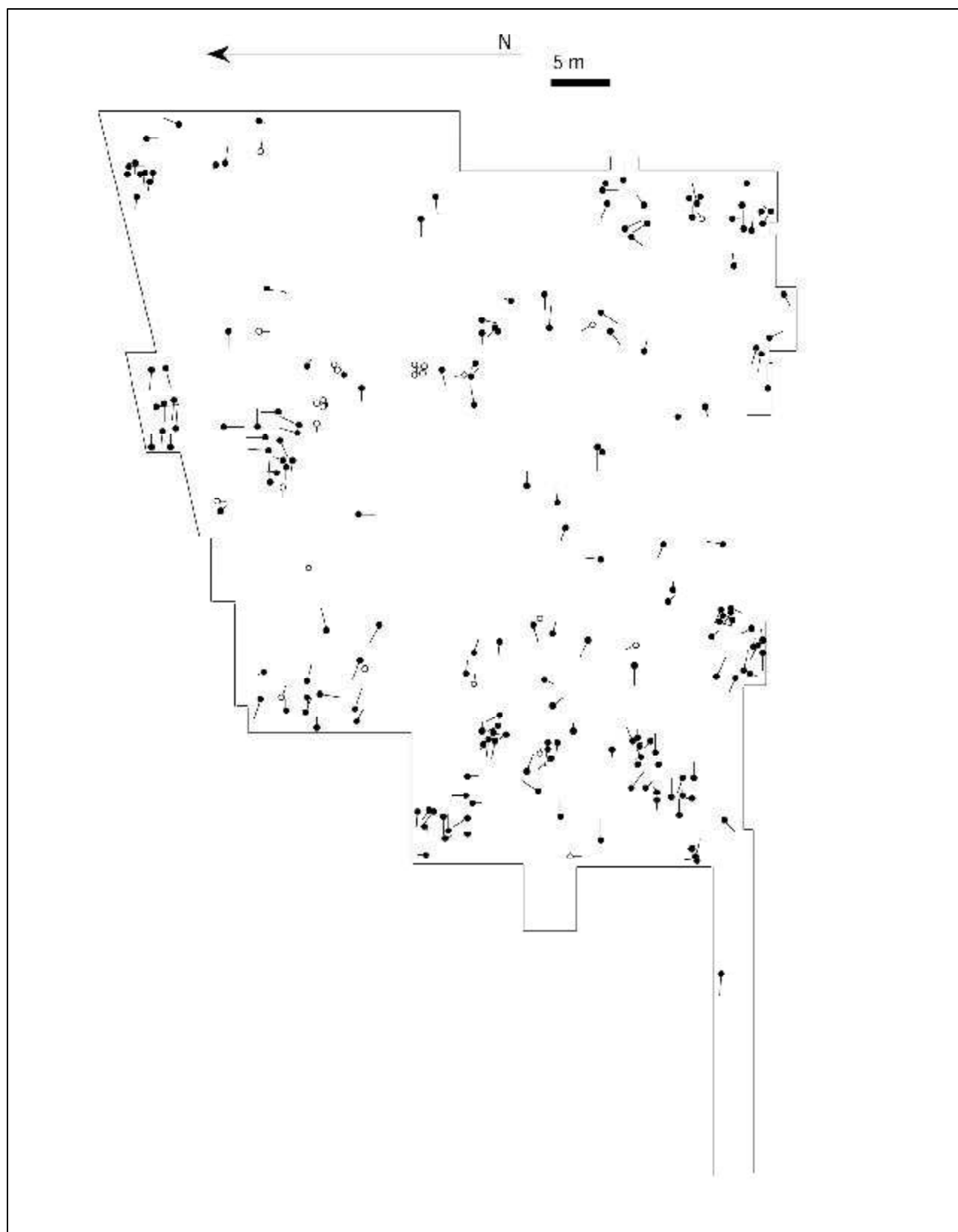


Figure 2.1. Burials from Tlatilco Temporada IV. Orientation of head indicated by circle.

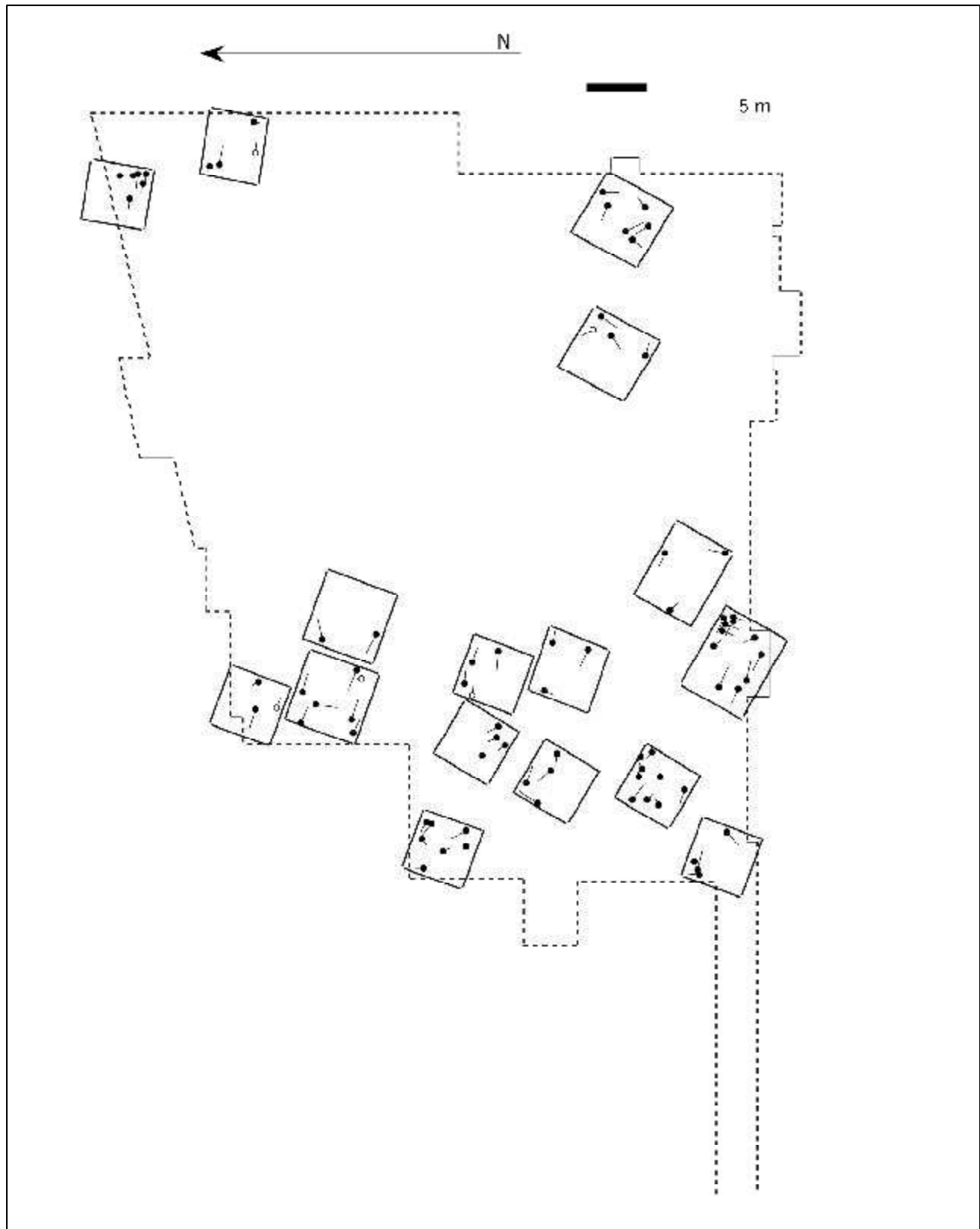


Figure 2.2. Tlatilco Temporada IV burials overlaid with rectangles representing typical local house foundation size, based on excavations at Coapexco. Only burials oriented east of north (west of south) included. Possible early phase of village?

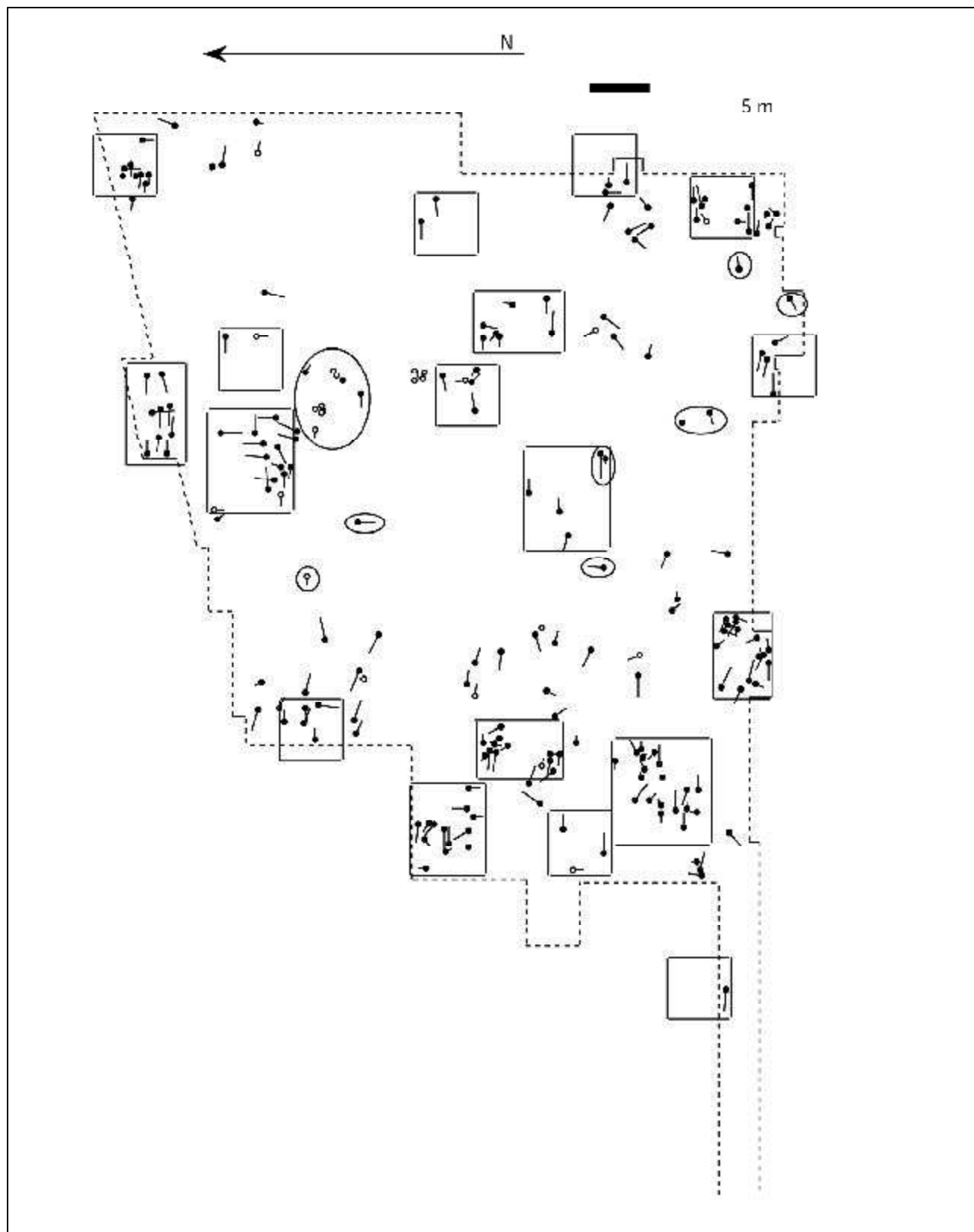


Figure 2.3. Tlatilco Temporada IV burials overlaid with rectangles representing typical local house foundation size, based on excavations at Coapexco. Only burials oriented north-south, east-west, used to align rectangles. Ovals mark extramural burials. All other burials from possible earlier phase of village.

was constrained by their expectation of the evaluation of others in their own social group, and by their own reflexive self-monitoring of their behavior in light of the models of acceptable and even laudable action provided by others in their intimate life (cf. Giddens 1979:202–10, 216–21). The product of their structured actions was both a perceptible material record of similarity over time and, equally important, a nonmaterial sense among members of the group of the perpetuation of connections among them. I view the fact that differences between groups are also evident primarily as an unintended consequence of structuration, a consequence that provided powerful material for discriminations within the wider community through their relation to the dead (cf. Giddens 1984:11–14). These relations of similarity within groups and differences between groups were adequately revealed through statistical approaches (Joyce 1999, 2001:chapter 2, *In press a*). Left behind in the wake of this level of analysis, however, is a residue of difference within groups that is better illustrated by a different approach, without which my account of life and death at Tlatilco would be appreciably diminished.

The Women of Tlatilco

I focus in this chapter only on the burials of women, not just because these have formed a major focus of my work on this population, but also because the very project I am undertaking greatly expands the space necessary to account for any one or a few of the burials within the Tlatilco population. Space does not allow this more nuanced exploration here of the death of both men and women at this site. Because previous analyses have repeatedly suggested that women may have made up the stable core of the social groups at Tlatilco, it is in their burials that I hope to see the greatest evidence of the appreciation of difference within the intimate quarters of the House, and the repetition of practices through which memory is mobilized and social structure reproduced.

Identifiably female burials made up about forty percent (86) of the 212 recorded burials excavated by INAH archaeologists during the fourth Tlatilco excavation campaign (Garcia Moll et al. 1991).¹ The occupants of these graves ranged in age from fifteen to over fifty years old. Many had indications of serious health problems: fifty-one percent suffered tooth decay, nineteen percent arthritic degeneration of the spine, and sixteen percent other disease-related changes to the skeleton. Tooth decay was noted as early as the age interval from fifteen to

nineteen years, spinal arthritis between twenty-six and thirty years. The bones of neonates were included in ten percent of the burials of females aged twenty through forty-four, perhaps as a result of infant and maternal mortality stemming from childbirth-related disease. One style of cranial modification, the tabular erect type, a practice detectable in unsexed skeletons as young as age nine months, was noted in sixty-six, or seventy-seven percent, of adult female burials.

The overall picture that emerges of women's lives at Tlatilco is easily summarized in this fashion. But this summary is as misleading as it is helpful. The composite female experience reflected here merges ages, as well as differences in elaboration between, and internal differentiation within, groups of burials likely to have been constructed by members of single social groups. An alternative way of seeing the women in these burials looks at what we can say about the life of each one individually by viewing their treatment in death as one point in the creation of their own social identities and their memorialization by their survivors.

This approach extends beyond the powerful products of statistical inference toward the limits of individual interpretation. In the following alternative account, I move from a more traditional, scientific, and generalizing language to a more particularistic, experiential, and emotional language. The burials chosen for description are representative of the key differences that can be documented in the burial population (Joyce 1999, 2001:chapter 2, *In press a*). The order of presentation moves from the examples for which we have least archaeological evidence to support an enriched description that takes into account social experience, to those that support the greatest amount of social interpretation. While I hope readers will take the opportunity to follow the shift in their own attitude toward the women of ancient Tlatilco by reading this narrative before seeking explanations for the selection of features highlighted, I also provide a running commentary in the endnotes that illuminates both my selection of these burials and my reasons for framing them as I do. The burials chosen for description cumulatively document the major trends revealed by the statistical analysis, but they do so by representing these trends as embodied in individual lives (cf. Meskell 1994). The result is likely to be uncomfortable for many archaeologists used to the ways that we have learned to banish emotion, experience, and the particular from our accounts. But, as I argue in my conclusion, there is something to be gained from this exercise that is crucial to the archaeological enterprise, something that is not ad-

vanced by our traditional normative and detached accounts of life and death.

Burying the Dead at Tlatilco

Burial 14A was one of five female burials forming a single cluster. Aged between seventeen and nineteen years, this individual exhibited the rarer tabular oblique cranial deformation, found in only seven burials at the site. The individual lacked any grave goods.²

The teenaged girl in burial 164 also was buried without any imperishable objects. Unlike the young woman in Burial 14A, her skull had been formed into the tabular erect shape more common among men and women at Tlatilco.³

The person in Burial 29, like Burial 164 the only female in her cluster, died at the same young age. Beginning in infancy by shaping her head, her family had labored to ensure that she approximated their ideal of beauty, and at her young death, she had an elegantly swept-back forehead. Reflecting the wealth of her House and her access through it to the choicest foods, her teeth already showed signs of decay. Surviving members of her family placed with her a single bowl and figurine, the most general offerings left with burials at Tlatilco, as well as a grinding stone and chipped stone scraper.⁴

The loss of the nineteen-year-old girl in burial 27 was felt deeply by her House. In life she had been intended to solidify ties between her House and another from the opposite moiety of Tlatilco. Her mortuary ceremonies were elaborated by her House to establish her firmly in the memory of both groups. She was dressed in her fanciest costume, with pendants of jade, shell, and iron ore from the borders of Guatemala, the Gulf Coast, and the Oaxaca Valley, the distant ends of the world known to her House. Multiple bowls, bottles, and figurines were left in her grave as a sign of respect and of confidence that her death would not represent a permanent setback for her House.⁵

If all went well, the young woman of burial 27 might one day be remembered as an important ancestor, like one of the two teenaged girls whose skulls were gathered with those of two other, older women in a pit in the courtyard of a neighboring house. The older of these two girls was accompanied in this relocation by the mandible of her six-month-old child, whose birth had ended her life and in turn, through her death, his own.⁶

Childbirth constituted a major risk for the younger adult women of the settlement, who often went to the

grave with the bodies of their own newborn infants. The twenty-four-year-old woman in Burial 208 was part of a large, if not wealthy, House, one of eight women buried in the compound. Like all the women of her House, her head had carefully been shaped to enhance her appearance. She had little access to rare foods, the prerogative of the elder women of her group. But in death her House, never able to afford much mortuary display, provided her with multiple pottery vessels and figurines as a sign of respect to the House of the father of the child she died bearing, whose body was placed in the ground with her. With luck, other women of the House might cement the bonds that had begun with this marriage, and help to increase the power and resources of the House.⁷

Such strategies had worked for the Houses to the east, whose alliances with distant villages provided abundant exotic goods, and whose ability to retain married children and their offspring provided enough labor to support House members skilled in producing obsidian blades and elaborate cotton textiles. When a daughter of one of these houses died in full youth, like the woman in Burial 95, she could be buried with elaborate mortuary ritual attended by all the other Houses to which her own was allied, because her House had the wealth necessary for display, feasting, and hospitality. The beauty of her artificially shaped head, elaborately dressed hair, and young body was further enhanced with shell, jade, and iron-ore beads and pendants, and the red pigment sprinkled over her. Nineteen pots and ten figurines were disposed of in her burial, including some of the most elaborate in the village. In recognition of the importance of obsidian working in the history of her House, a single flake and a bone punch were added to the grave. Although young to die, at twenty-four, her mortuary rituals further cemented the ties to the House of her children's father, already forged over several generations.⁸

The rites accompanying the interment of her slightly older House sister in Burial 109 were more modest, befitting this woman's less untimely death and the lesser risk it posed to House alliances. Nevertheless, the House took care to mark her burial with the same signs of its history, bone punches and an obsidian core, and placed an animal mandible ornament to complement her beautifully shaped skull and finely filed teeth. She had already achieved an honored place in life, and the beginnings of decay in her teeth reflected the access she had enjoyed to sweet foods. The two pots placed with the body were the minimum required for the ceremony, but well made and no insult to the House to which she had borne children.⁹

At times a House invested more in the burial of a daughter who died at the brink of old age. The thirty-nine-year-old woman in Burial 130 was relatively healthy, despite the tooth decay she owed to the wealth of her House and her honored status within it. Her death, while not unusually early, was at a younger age than that of other women in the community, and she left behind a large number of children and grandchildren to mourn her. These descendants saw that she was accompanied by two dozen of the finest pots, and five figurines, and carefully placed her grinding stones in the burial. They dressed her in the clay rattles that she wore when, with the other mothers, she danced in recollection of her youth.¹⁰

In this, she was like the older woman of the western House, placed in Burial 157 accompanied by twenty-one pots and four whistles, wearing bone bead ornaments and her rattles. While the wealth of her House was less, and it lacked the wide external connections and active trading partnerships of the southeast House, it was equally proud of its history and respectful of the women who helped distinguish it from lesser neighboring Houses.

For most women in their late thirties, life was difficult and death was little marked. The women in Burials 105 and 115 were respectfully buried by the surviving members of their House, one with three pots, the other wearing shell beads and her rattle ornaments. However, both had already, by age thirty-nine, suffered serious spinal arthritis and tooth decay; the woman in Burial 105 had lesions on her jaw as well. While this House managed to mark the burials of younger women, on whom their alliances depended, with appropriate offerings of up to twenty pots and eleven figurines, and ornaments of shell and iron ore, it was not large enough to spare its elder women the hard labor that gradually deformed their spines and crippled their bodies.

Some singularly important women over forty were given prominent, isolated burials by the groups of Houses who recognized debts to them. The older woman in Burial 9 was covered in red pigment like a much younger girl and she had her stone pestle at her hand, and two dogs were killed to accompany her after death. She had practiced her craft of divination and curing for the village as a whole, and was no longer counted a member of a single House, but had ties to several. The skull of another older woman was recovered, burned, and placed in Burial 182 along with a single pot and a basalt yoke, emblem of the ritual ball game through which her head was identified with the sprouting seed of the underworld tree of life. No longer identified as a named person, she stood as a generalized representative of the founding ancestors ven-

erated by the Houses of the southeastern neighborhood, who had promised and delivered the knowledge of working obsidian to their descendants.¹¹

But most elderly women were buried more simply. The forty-four-year-old woman in Burial 189 wore a simple necklace of bone beads. The fifty-year-old woman in Burial 195 in the same group was placed in her grave with no imperishable ornamentation at all, and like her House sister had no pottery vessels or figurines in her grave. The extremely elderly woman in Burial 63, bent by severe spinal arthritis, although sufficiently well loved to be carefully buried, was also placed in her grave without ornament or elaboration. Unlike the younger women of Tlatilco, these older women had established their social memories through their lives, and through the names of their children and children's children and the passing on of family traditions and heirlooms (see Joyce 2000). No postmortem construction of a material history was required for them.

Burials and Social Memory

The details of biography of each of the women whose lives intersected the material record of Tlatilco are of course speculative, but something close to the considerations I have suggested above must have underwritten the creation of their distinct mortuary settings. These are a complex result of the actions of surviving members of the group on which the dead had claims for lasting care, and to which they represented a node in networks of social memory. Each woman's grave was utterly unique, with no repetition of precise numbers and kinds of artifacts, body position, or preparation of the grave. Yet each also exhibits subtle regularities that reflect the overall wealth of her group, the extent of its external links to sources of rare raw materials, the physical experiences of the deceased during life, and variation (related to age) in the disruptive effects death had on the social relations of survivors.

Teasing apart these different sources of variation is not as simple as statistically analyzing the burials to determine clusters of similar treatments, although precisely such a procedure originally drew my attention to the dimensions of variation that are most regular: the association of maximum burial elaboration with women between fifteen and nineteen years old, and of elderly women with the least pottery and greatest overall variability (cf. Joyce 1999, 2001:chapter 2, *In press a*). The failure of purely statistical procedures to exploit all the information in these burials is due, I would suggest, to the underlying assumption, necessary for the employment of the statis-

tical methods, that the burials are all members of a single population structured by a single common set of factors.

Instead, we can and surely must acknowledge that burial populations like this are a complex site for the construction by survivors of social memory that simultaneously binds together some of the living, connects them with the dead, and differentiates them from others, both living and dead, as kin and not-kin, peers and not-peers, individual persons and part of corporate groups. In my narrative representation of the variation among the burials I discuss here, I have highlighted three themes that continually reappear in ethnographic accounts of ceremonies linked to death: the emotional charge of beautification; the importance of memory and commemoration in the process of becoming an ancestor, and potential contention over the memory of the dead; and the individual and social experience of emotions of grief, regret, and acceptance of loss. I argue that archaeologists have abundant material available to consider, if not resolve, the significance of such phenomena in mortuary analysis.

By *beautification* I refer, following Munn (1986), to practices of ornamentation through which the bodies of the dead at Tlatilco were distinctively marked (Joyce 1999:19, In press a). Munn related beautification to the desire to enhance the attraction to and persuasiveness of a person. Ken George (1996:143–45), basing his analysis on the work of Georg Simmel (1950), discusses explicitly how adornment serves to distinguish a person and arouses both envy and admiration. The differential beautification of the deceased in burials at Tlatilco was not simply a reflection of reified status; it was an incorporation of a sensual appeal for mourners and others to appreciate the distinction of the dead person and the living members of her social House.

The production of social memory of the deceased was, I suggest, partly founded on the sensual impression of the experience of mortuary ceremonies. George (1996:186–200) emphasizes the sociality of commemoration and notes the equation of commemorative actions with adornment in the Indonesian setting of his ethnography. This would suggest that commemorative ceremonies were also open to the emotional play of persuasion, admiration, and envy evoked by personal adornment. Sergei Kan (1989:125–64, 186–212) describes the way that Tlingit funeral and commemorative ceremonies embodied distinctions between different social groups and individuals who stood in specific relations to the deceased, relations that were subject in some degree to contestation. One of the possible sources of variation in investment in mortuary treatment at Tlatilco, I suggest, was the desire to formally address potential claims by

different groups of mourners, potential claims that appear to have been most marked for young adult women as a whole and for women from specific social groups engaged more generally in competition for social distinction (Joyce In press a). The elaborate adornment of some young women, and the proliferation of objects placed in their graves, may be media through which the creation of their social memory as members of particular groups, ancestors in the making, was made persuasive.

Death initiated a complex series of adjustments including competition over the framing of the memory of the deceased. But it is well in the end to return to a consideration of the emotional reactions that death would have called into being and that mortuary rituals would have confronted and formalized. General anthropological discussions of death stress that the emotions associated cannot be assumed to be regular cross-culturally (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:2–5, 43–61). But Renato Rosaldo (1984) powerfully counters such a cautionary note with the observation that without consideration of the emotional experiences surrounding death, we necessarily produce accounts that divert our attention from powerful motivations for actions associated with death (see also Kan 1989:16–21). The emotional nexus surrounding death is only partly predictable from structural understandings: the emotions experienced by persons in particular relations to the deceased may follow general social expectations or depart from them. Mortuary rituals often provide a setting for the display of formally expected emotional reactions, and may simultaneously provide forms in which to express emotional states that are personal and idiosyncratic (Kan 1989:141–56; George 1996:103–10, 123–28).

My commentary on the Tlatilco burials attempts to suggest the possible existence of both personalized senses of grief and loss and more formalized and diffuse emotional attitudes toward the dead. I take as potential points of emotional focus the degree to which a death might have been unexpected and disruptive and the way that a death might have affected ongoing political negotiations between Houses. Because of the demographics of early agrarian villages, burial practices would have had a pervasive presence in the lives of the inhabitants of Tlatilco. Over their lifetimes, members of the society who survived to maturity could witness a number of deaths equal to the population of the entire settlement.¹² The death of close family members and neighbors would have been common, providing the ground for a profoundly different personal experience of death from that familiar to contemporary urban dwellers. As David Keightley (1998:776–77) writes, the members of such communi-

ties may have “accepted death, not as a violent affront to their expectations, but as a common, inevitable, and not inharmonious consequence of life itself.” Keightley (1998:777, 788–91) draws attention to the possible significance under these circumstances of expectations for continuing communication between living members of a group and the deceased. Susan Gillespie (In press) describes the relations of the living and the dead in the similar contexts of Classic Maya society as a matter of “curation, transformation, and regeneration” of persons who belonged to the house, and whose membership in it was not ended by the event of physical death (see also Hendon 2000; McAnany 1995). Mortuary practices at Tlatilco, then, may be thought of as initiating a new stage in the life course of individual group members and their relations with others, and as reiterating the membership of the deceased individual in the particular group. I do not discount feelings of loss that others in the community may have had when deprived of the kind of intimate face-to-face connection they had previously had with the now-transformed dead person. Nonetheless, I would suggest that consideration of the demographic situation reinforces the impression of mortuary rites at Tlatilco as a celebratory incorporation of the buried dead into the permanent place and memory of those who survived.

Burials deserve their privileged place in archaeology because they are one of the few locations where past ritual practices are preserved in structured form. But they do not passively *reflect* social reality at the time they were created. Instead, they were active media for the constitution of social relations in ongoing time: points in individual biographies that were partly freed from individual biography to become strands in wider social histories, not only through oral tradition but also through their physical reworking over time. Providing precedent for later practices, burials allowed the construction of relations of continuity through repetition. They facilitated the linking of historical practice to place, through their permanent emplacement in locations whose character derived in part from the presence of the dead.

Acknowledgments

The first version of my analysis of the Tlatilco burials was presented in 1993 at the Dumbarton Oaks Precolumbian Studies Symposium “Ritual Behavior, Social Identity and Cosmology in Pre-Classic Mesoamerica.” I would like to thank David C. Grove for inviting me to co-organize this symposium and encouraging me to work on the Tlatilco burials. The first attempt at a more narrative presentation of the lives of

women of Tlatilco was presented in 1994 at the conference “Gender in Ancient America,” organized by Cheryl Claassen, at Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina. I appreciate the positive reception given the presentation by the participants at that conference. Finally, I thank Meredith Chesson and Ian Kuijt for the invitation to participate in the AAA session in 1997 that led to the present volume, and the discussants in that session, Susan Kus, Ken George, and Tom Dillehay, for the inspiration provided by their comments.

Notes

1. While archaeologists recorded other burials in other seasons of work at Tlatilco, those from season IV are the only ones for which full professional osteological examinations have been completed and published. In addition to the eighty-six burials identified as female, this sample included seventy-seven burials identified as male (36 percent) and forty-nine (23 percent) of uncertain sex, the majority of these (40 burials, 19 percent) infants and juveniles (age estimates through 14 years old). (Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding.)

2. When we label the practice of shaping the skull “deformation,” we project an assessment of value that is almost certainly the opposite of that internal to the society, where a particular appearance was valued so highly that steps were taken to produce it in living bodies. The forms of cranial modification recorded at Tlatilco—tabular erect and tabular oblique—have mainly been treated as evidence for the existence of different cultural or ethnic groups. Thus, linking Burial 14A not to the other burials in the local group, but to a segment of the wider population recovered at the site follows the traditional practice of treating the burial population as representative of a uniform cultural group. The shaping of the skull itself was most likely accomplished through the use of a cradle board in infancy, but the existence of multiple modes of head shaping strongly suggests we should consider this a practice of beautification, not simply an unexpected by-product of a technology of child care.

3. While by age she was a member of the same social cohort as the woman in Burial 14A, these two teenagers would have presented quite distinct physical appearance. The public evaluation of individual difference in appearance is one of the forces that I suggest led to the use of practices of beautification evident in the burials, as well as in figurines from the site (Joyce In press a).

4. The dental caries recorded for this burial, and others at the site, may be primarily attributable to the consumption of corn-based foods high in sticky carbohydrates that provide a medium for bacterial growth. For the popu-

lation as a whole caries was most strongly associated with more advanced age.

5. Here I accept Tolstoy's (1989) suggestion that the community of Tlatilco was organized in two social segments that we might recognize anthropologically as moieties, employing different preferred burial orientations. Ethnographically, ties between such social segments are reinforced through kinship, especially repeated marriages over generations (cf. McKinnon 1991:134–62, 199–226). Tolstoy suggested that the preferred postmarital residence pattern at Tlatilco was matrilineal, leading to the interpretation of the women as birth members of the localized group whose houses occupied the area where they were buried. I argue elsewhere that the body ornaments in Tlatilco burials were part of dance costumes worn in life-cycle rituals, and that these were material indications of investment in the life course of youths by their Houses (Joyce 1999, 2000, 2001:chapter 2, *In press a*).

6. The presence in a single deposit of multiple skulls is evidence of deliberate selection and treatment of a body part in an ongoing relationship to the dead whose remains would have been encountered in the reworking of the lived space of the house compound. The selection of cranial material is particularly interesting, given indications that the skull, or a representation of the skull or head, was the physical site of individuation of the person in Mesoamerica at this time (Joyce 1998b). Through the curation of skulls encountered during intentional or accidental reworking of house compound space, successors to this place physically concentrated the most personally significant body parts of predecessors, now transformed through death and primary burial into ancestors (cf. Kuijt this volume). I chose to label the infant *he* to mark the fact that in a matrilineal society both male and female offspring belong to the household of their mother. The presence of the infant mandible could represent the use of this body part as an ornament (cf. Joyce 1998b), but here I use it to raise the issue of the high health costs of maternity in premodern societies. Both male and female populations at Tlatilco were divided into age cohorts sharing burial practices and costume ornaments (Joyce 2001:chapter 2, *In press a*), but the cohorts of the female burial population were about five to ten years younger than the male cohorts with which they shared attributes. This conforms to the overall shorter life expectancy and higher mortality as young adults for females, both likely a result of the risks of childbirth for women. Maternal death would also have been an increased risk factor for unweaned infants whose principal source of protein would have been breast milk (cf.

Storey 1992), and the effects of the loss of the mother need not have been immediately evident. Thus I offer here the possibility that the 6-month-old child survived its mother's death only to succumb within months to nutritional stress and illness.

7. I use "rare food" here to refer to sweet food, most likely corn, which may be the cause of greater dental decay seen earlier in other individuals, such as the woman in Burial 29. The pattern in this burial cluster, of later evidence of dental decay, suggests that this sticky carbohydrate food was not a large part of the diet of the group so that its effects were manifest only at older ages.

8. As Susan McKinnon (1991:134–62, 199–226) demonstrates, in House societies a core of residents, related through a combination of descent, marriage, and patron-client links, cooperate in pursuit of the economic and social persistence of the house. Ceremonies recognizing sexual relationships or commemorating deceased house members are often settings for the circulation of named valuables between allied houses (McKinnon 1991:144–61; Munn 1986:124–38; Kan 1989:236–46). In the negotiation of alliances, individual and house interests may part ways, particularly in the desire to contract or recognize sexual relationships (McKinnon 1991:259–76). Such complex social dynamics are among the causes of the material traces on which we base archaeological interpretation (Joyce 1999, 2000).

9. Following the assumption that the clusters of burials represent dead members of a localized group, the woman in this burial was a member of the same social group, or House, as the woman in Burial 95. Labeling these people House sisters is an invocation of the contemporary concept of kinship as something created through action, rather than given by biological difference (see Schneider 1984, especially pp. 165–77). Susan Gillespie and I have explored how such a reworked notion of identification at the scale of the House has utility for bridging ethnography and archaeology (Joyce and Gillespie 2000, especially Joyce 2000). Differences in burial treatment within this cluster at Tlatilco, like the differences seen in the community as a whole, are primarily related to age. In the kind of small-scale, face-to-face ranked society that Tlatilco most certainly was, progress from junior to elder was a process both of gaining status and of resolution of some of the potential tension surrounding the negotiation of social alliances. I am suggesting that one of the reasons for the strong association of the most elaborate burials with young adults at Tlatilco is the social position of these people at the nexus of not-yet-consolidated relations between social groups.

10. Following the simple observation that it is the survivors of the dead who elaborate mortuary settings, I infer that the distinction accorded this older woman (when compared to others of her cohort) reflects a larger social network that paid respect to her at death. A reviewer took umbrage at this inference, parenthetically suggesting, "Maybe she was infertile?" While, as a woman without offspring myself, I would like to think my nieces and nephews will care as deeply about my death as I and my siblings did about those of our parents, I really find relatively uncontroversial the assumption that this woman had successors for whom she was someone to commemorate. Of course, since I am talking about House descendants—who need not have been her biological offspring—the point is really moot. Perhaps, in such a village, lives were in some ways more thickly connected than in contemporary North American society. It is, of course, necessary to recognize that in such a village death may have been more common and experienced less as a loss than as an expected life event (see my discussion of the work of David Keightley, below, for more on this possibility).

11. Here I am building on the idea that truly unique characteristics represent achievements of the individual, an assumption based on the processual approach to mortuary analysis that sees burials as reflecting social personae of the deceased (Binford 1971; Brown 1995; Saxe 1970). The suggested associations with divination, curing, and ritual follow general evidence in later Mesoamerican societies for the practice of specializations of this sort by older women (see Joyce 2001, In press b). The items found with these women are extremely evocative, but their very rarity makes their interpretation inherently most speculative. To leave these outliers out of consideration, however, would be to artificially simplify the dynamics of ancient Tlatilco; and once the decision was made to examine even these unusual cases, it became possible to see that these unique burials were similar in their anomalous spatial locations and age cohort.

12. I am indebted to Professor David Keightley for drawing my attention to the sheer scale of encounters with death in premodern agrarian villages and for sharing the results of his consultation with demographers to confirm this general proposition.

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The Egyptian Ways of Death

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*If you think of burial, it is agony
it is the bringing of tears through making a man miserable
it is taking a man from his house,
being cast upon the high ground.
You shall not come up again to see suns.¹*

Egyptology has always directed most attention toward the archaeology of death, excavation of cemetery sites, mortuary rituals, and texts dealing with concepts of the afterlife. A handful of scholars have sought to interpret the rich data available through the lens of anthropological or sociological perspectives, the most notable being Jan Assmann and John Baines. The evidence at hand is both archaeological and textual; these two types exist for comparable time periods, and can be examined together in a recursive manner. This chapter seeks to explore those data sets for non-elite groups in the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1100 B.C.), focusing on the pervasive cultural attitudes to death and the afterlife, the body in death, the relationship between sexual and mortuary spheres, rituals of mourning, and various practices designed to perpetuate the deceased's memory. Various examples are used from the site of Deir el Medina, a workers' village on the West Bank of Luxor, with excellent preservation of both settlement and cemeteries (Figures 3.1 and 3.2; see Meskell 1999). The chapter begins with the ways modern scholarship has cast the experience of death in antiquity, and challenges the reductive binaries subsequently created to distance ourselves from the ancients. Here I argue that more attention to the cultural specificities of other cultures would have resulted in a fuller appreciation of the variant ways of dealing with death and memory. This is followed by a discussion of the corporeal philosophies surrounding death and rebirth. Throughout I consider how material constructions, rituals and festivals, and commemorative practices prefigured a culturally specific experience of death and memory in New Kingdom Egypt.

Death: Ancient and Modern

Many studies have sought to draw the boundaries between modern and pre-modern concepts of death, although most refer to European evidence rather than that of truly ancient cultures such as Egypt. From his historical perspective, Ariès (1974, 1981) argued that death was always a social phenomenon, an event that produced communal responses and that was contained by collective signs and rituals. In the past, death represented a disruption to the *social body* more than it did the passing of an *individual body*. According to his influential thesis, identity was rooted more in the group than within the individual. Thus, in the past, death did not threaten the individual as it does in today's society: death meant that the society had lost part of itself, more than the individual had lost society (Bloch and Parry 1982). Ariès's panoramic survey is flawed for several reasons, one being its collective focus upon the most recent 1500 years of European history, and another being the search for generalizing strategies and attitudes (Whaley 1981:5). But Ariès is not alone, and his views are not simply the result of his own historicosocial setting. Consider the recent views of Young and Papadatou (1997:192) on childhood death: "Throughout most of the history of humankind, the deaths of infants and children were common events. In countries where rates of mortality are currently high, the death of a child is often perceived as inevitable, with mourning lasting no more than a few days." Contrary to this view, Egyptian texts such as the *Eloquent Peasant* and *The Dialogue of a Man and His Soul* convey grief and despair over the early deaths of



Figure 3.1. The village of Deir el Medina with the Eastern Necropolis behind (photo by the author).

children (Parkinson 1997). In addition, my own research at the New Kingdom site of Deir el Medina (Meskell 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1999) suggests that the burials of children represent meaningful and careful burials and that they were already considered embodied beings, worthy of both emotional and material outlay.

Ariès's thesis tends to privilege society over the individual, as if such an arbitrary dichotomy is somehow experiential at the moment of death and during the period of loss that follows. This is not to deny that confronting death is a reflective process that prompts those left behind to grieve for their own loss of the individual and contemplate their own mortality. However, the false binary structure Ariès seeks to implement is a universalizing explanation that cannot account for the range of practices undertaken (see Rosaldo 1986), by people of varying socioeconomic status. We must consider that the death of an individual was a seriously disruptive event, both socially and emotionally, to those directly involved. Psychological readjustment was one immediate concern and a host of activities facilitated that process: public and personal rituals of grief and mourning, dispersal of the deceased's property with its

elaborate social and legal conventions, and rites of burial and commemoration. Rituals of translation often served to restructure those disrupted social and personal relationships (Whaley 1981:2), though the emotive dimensions should not be devalued. In Egypt there were other rituals and festivals beyond the initial restructuring following death, and these practices served to keep the deceased as participants in society and their memories alive for at least a generation or two.

The Egyptians conceived of death and rebirth as cyclical, and believed that individuals themselves lived on, as did specific components of the person's individuality, personality, and identity. The unity of life created a biography that accompanied the individual to the next world. The "autobiographies" surviving in a few New Kingdom non-royal tombs give a sense of this. They combine personal information with narratives of life achievements that were a subject of pride to the deceased and accompanied him to the next world. Ahmose, son of Ibana, wrote in his autobiography: "I grew up in the town of Nekheb, my father being a soldier of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Seqenenre, the justified. Baba son



Figure 3.2. The Western Necropolis of Deir el Medina (photo by the author).

of Reonet was his name. I became a soldier in his stead on the ship ‘The Wild Bull’....”² Elite autobiographies like Ahmose’s suggest that examining Egyptian culture from the top down might lead to the assumption that death was seen as a state to be celebrated and accepted, not feared, since wealthy Egyptians prepared all their lives for death. Evidence from monuments, tombs, and many formal texts presents a rather optimistic scenario that must have been ingrained in numerous aspects of living experience. However, viewed from the ground up, the more individual accounts of death and dying suggest a radically different picture—one that showed death and decay in all its horror. Ordinary people knew that tombs were plundered and mummies violated, and that the offering cults were not maintained forever. Fears were real and tangible, and despite all the religious and ritual hyperbole there was an acknowledgment of the uncertainties of the next world. At the heart of these anxieties was a desire for bodily integrity during the liminal phase following death and during the passage to the afterworld. Success in the afterlife was founded on a specific corporeal perfection.

Somatic Identities

In New Kingdom Egypt the human being was viewed as a complex composite of many parts, each essential to individual existence. The loss of one meant the loss of all. Some of these elements were thought to exist during life, while others were only activated after death. In the Eighteenth Dynasty Theban tomb of Amenemhet (TT82) some of these constituents are mentioned: his fate or *sxʿA* (the phonetic symbol), his corpse or *Xʿt*, his lifetime/character or *dhʿa* and all his manifestations or *xprw*. They are presented each as divinities that can receive offerings and confer blessings, yet they are still integral elements of the individual, Amenemhet. Interestingly, the body, or physical form, could be perceived in a variety of ways. The living body or *Xt*, was written with the sign for belly, while the corpse was written with the sign of the much-disliked fish. Another constituent often mentioned was the heart, *ib*, which was the seat of reason, memory, conscience, desire, and emotion. It was also the center of free will and had a personality of its own. In the Memphite theology the heart and tongue are said to have

power over all other organs (Hornung 1992). The name, or *rn*, was vitally important and similarly had its own identity: to destroy the name meant the total destruction of the individual. Defacement of the name of the deceased was seen as a negation of a person's existence and his/her opportunity of attaining the afterlife. The use of the name perpetuates the personality: you do not have a name, you *are* a name, just as you *are* a body (Milde 1988). The name was not an abstract entity since it belonged to the physical world. Recently Bolshakov (1997:154) has interpreted *m* as the name in its daily and ideological aspects. It was similarly the identification of a person, his/her essence and the bearer of his/her individuality. The name resembled the conception of the human shadow, in that it was able to carry and transfer power (Hornung 1992:179). These various constituents of the self cover a multiplicity of aspects: an individual's vitality, capacity for movement and effectiveness, physical appearance, personality, and the mysterious shadow, as well as one's intellectual, emotional, and moral dimensions (Lloyd 1989:120). But it is likely that most of these aspects of self were activated only in death.

According to the Egyptian belief system individual selves persisted after death and were in fact multiply constituted. Five essential components of the individual may survive after death: the name or *rn*, the shadow, *Swt*, and his/her personal magic, *HkA* along with the *ka* and *ba* discussed below (Pinch 1994:147; Zandee 1960:20). Not only did the corporeal body have a tangible trajectory after death, it too could be seen as divisible or multifaceted. The self was constituted from several elements, though none of these exactly translate as a soul. There was the *ka*, which was the vital force, or double self, and inextricably linked with the physical body. Alternatively, the *ka* has been described as a series of relations and representations. It was the memory of the deceased and physical representations served to activate this memory—acting as a door, reviving the image of the person in the memory (Bolshakov 1997:145–52). The Egyptians objectified their recollections, yet the *ka* remained a fundamental property of reality, an absolute material entity. It was a copy of a whole person's individuality in both appearance and personal characteristics (Bolshakov 1997:152). Correspondingly, the *ba* seems to have retained the character of the individual, although it depended on the physical body for existence. It had material needs as well—bread, beer, and everything else a body requires (Hornung 1992:181). This entity was usually depicted as a human-headed bird

that journeyed into the underworld and was also at risk of dying a second and final death. After surviving various trials the deceased may attain the status of *Ax*, a transfigured and effective spirit (Pinch 1994). According to the *Maxims of Any* one should “satisfy the *akh*; do what he desires, and abstain for him from abomination, that you may be safe from his harms” (McDowell 1999). There were other troublesome spirits called the “dangerous dead.” They seem to be entities that retained the sex of the individual through life, and female spirits seem to have been more feared. Thus the dead retained their sexed identity in the hereafter. So within this schema the various elements remained although an individual could ultimately adopt various trajectories through time, benevolent or otherwise. An individual could be multiply constituted within his/her own body. Individuals were also perceived as beings linked to others, usually kin, and as such, concepts of the individual may go beyond the boundaries of the person.

From an Egyptian perspective, death was a transitory state and it did not prevent people from involving themselves in the world of the living. The texts reveal that the self continued after death and indeed living and dead were part of the same earthly world. The dead could intervene in daily affairs, although memories of the deceased did not appear to transcend many generations (Baines 1991). The mortuary cult in the tomb was the basic context in which living and dead individuals maintained contact: there were regular offerings and family visits during festivals. The living had certain obligations to the dead, and a relationship of reciprocity was perhaps the ideal. In the necropolis the dead could be a malevolent or benevolent presence to the living, especially to those who visited this potent locale (Baines and Lacovara 1996). One sinister connection between living and dead, again centering on the tomb, took the form of curses against those who defiled or vandalized tombs (Posener 1988). Requests, advice, and magical intervention could also be sought from the deceased, as the textual evidence from the New Kingdom illustrates.

Documentary sources provide vivid testimonies to the Egyptian belief that dead individuals still participated, and were a powerful force, in the world of the living. Additionally, there are letters from individuals to their deceased relatives, like that of scribe Butehamun to his dead wife Ikhtay, written in the Twentieth Dynasty. In the extract of the letter, Butehamun asks Ikhtay to petition the Lords of Eternity on his behalf. We see clearly Butehamun's sense of the inevitability of death together with its unknowability, while his doubts that his words

will reach his wife in the afterworld contrast strikingly with the hopefulness expressed by the act of writing at all (McDowell 1999:106). In fact, the deceased holds a privileged position being closer to the gods and acting as intercessor for human individuals in the living world. Texts like these were usually left at the tomb of the deceased. In magical terms this would appear to be the most promising point of contact with the other world. Such a practice testifies to the continuing social interactions between living and dead individuals:

*Said by the scribe Butehamun
of the Necropolis to the songstress of Amen Ikhtay.
Pre has gone,
his ennead following him,
and the kings of old likewise.
All the people in one body
follow their companions.
There is not one of them who will remain,
and we will all follow you.
If one can hear me
(in) the place where you are,
tell the Lords of Eternity,
“Let (me) petition for my brother,”
so that I may make [...] in [their] hearts,
whether they are great or small.
It is you who will speak with a good speech
in the necropolis.
Indeed, I did not commit an abomination
against you
while you were on earth,
and I hold to my behaviour.
Swear to god in every manner,
saying “What I have said will be done!”
I will not oppose your will in any utterance
until I reach you.
[May you act] for me (in) every good manner,
if one can hear.”³*

The Egyptian belief system challenges many normative assumptions we might make about the body and self in death. The texts suggest that persons were multiply constituted throughout life, and death, and that spiritual and corporeal selves were inextricably bound together, in contrast with the Platonic notion of the soul as an entity imprisoned within flesh. How individual people experienced themselves during daily life has gone sadly unrecorded, however. Egyptian notions of embodied individuality appear to us as fluid and unbounded, giving rise to experience that is conceptually closer to that of non-Western cultures, as documented in anthropological accounts (see Strathern 1988:208). Evidence from ancient Egypt reflects another series of complex articulations between identity, body, and death.

The Body in Death

Egyptian rituals of death are usually taxonomized into the following stages: a mourning period, preparation of the corpse, interment, and regular cultic practices for the deceased intended to be maintained indefinitely (Lloyd 1989:124–31). These practices were often preceded by the much earlier construction of the tomb for wealthier individuals. Such an emotional and material investment presumably affected the experience of death, if only in terms of preparation and determinacy. John Baines (1991) states that the Egyptians, like many groups, tended to dramatize their loss on a communal scale, thus making loss bearable through its public display. Further, loss creates loose ends in terms of orphans, widows, and the aged, who have no tangible source of support. The death of an individual manifests in disorder and grief at many personal and embodied levels. One could see the phenomenon of death as linked to a psychological infrastructure. Most scholars see a project of three stages: separation and bereavement; recovery and readjustment; and maintenance, in which the dead are incorporated into the world of the living via continuing rituals. This tripartite framework is based on the influential model formulated by the Belgian anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep (1960 [1909]), who was interested in Egyptian funerary rituals. Indeed, the tripartite model he suggested as applicable to all life stages may have been influenced by his friendship with the Swiss Egyptologist Gustave Jéquier (1868–1946) and his French translation of the *Book of the Dead* in 1892.

During the first stage public grief was displayed and preparations of the body were undertaken, supposedly lasting up to seventy days. This number was probably an ideal or possibly even magical (Baines and Lacovara 1996). For the deceased, the body and personality were preserved, while they were transformed in order to attain the next level of being. Through ritual activity the *HkA* or personal magic, was activated. This extended period may have enabled family and friends to adjust and reintegrate the deceased into the group in a new social form; or it could be that what was reintegrated was the living social group, in altered roles now that the deceased was no longer present. The recovery stage was marked by the funeral, operative on a community level, after the process of mummification, if used, was completed. The embalmers employed the materiality of the body to make a lifelike, lasting image that could be revived and act as a vehicle for the transfigured person at any time (Hornung 1992:168). Many bodies were not fully embalmed, even

those belonging to wealthier individuals at Deir el Medina. A form of revival occurred at the funeral, which encompassed rituals of transfiguration such as the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, which sought to reanimate the bodily functions, especially speech, leading to rebirth. The ability of the dead to speak was important, because the transitions they had to undergo before transfiguration often revolved around speaking the correct formula at the right moment. It was hoped that after passing through the postmortem transitions successfully, the deceased would *become an Osiris*—as both women and men are designated on such funerary equipment as coffins and shabtis. There is a vocal concern for maintenance of the *ka*, *ba*, *Ax*, heart, corpse, shadow, and name, in the sphere of death. To maintain the deceased in the afterworld, social support was required, in the form of continued rituals, by family and community members after death. This could include meals taken in the tomb chapel, and the recitation of an offering formula, which would provide *every vital thing* to sustain the person.

To guarantee a full afterlife the corporeal body itself had to be physically intact, and there are innumerable textual references to fear concerning bodily destruction (Zandee 1960:14–19). Terror and disgust are evoked through confrontation with the dead body, and various spells could be invoked to check the transitory state of the corpse (e.g., the *Coffin Texts* or *Book of the Dead*). There is much explicit concern over the bodily fluids, such as sweat, and with the dead body and loss of integrity through the presence of maggots. Sensual descriptions of death are common, and the Egyptians were not reticent to write about the smell of the decaying body, the disintegration by parasites, the rotting of flesh, mutilation, and the perishing of eyes. Contradictory to the catalogue of known effects of bodily death, texts also stress the beauty and godlike quality of the deceased, particularly the imperishable *bones of bronze* and *limbs of gold* (Zandee 1960:58). Fear and acknowledgment of decomposition were juxtaposed with claims of godlike preservation and perfection. As Richard Parkinson (1997:151) reminds us, “Death was respected by the Egyptians, but also feared...its horror and its blessing, and...the uncertainty about what comes after death.”

The corporeal self should have integrity in death, hence the coffin itself acted as a regenerative casing that would facilitate the emergence of the transfigured body free from earthly imperfections (Hornung 1992:169; Willems 1988). At sites like Deir el Medina, from Ramesside times onwards, we can see how the coffin becomes a focus of funerary wealth and elaboration (Meskell 1997). This process of resurrection did not oc-

cur on one auspicious occasion, but took place every night in the depths of the underworld, where dead individuals could take command over their bodies. In a sense, existence formed a continuum that was only marginally interrupted by the experience of death. The needs of the body also extended into the afterlife, including sexuality and material pleasures. The physical body could only really attain divinity through confronting the ultimate challenge to its integrity—death itself. One might see that religious systems and social ideology might also allow for the possibility for a “good burial”—in ancient Egyptian culture, as well as in our own.⁴ In the course of life, one could internalize these meanings and thus transcend the contingencies of life (Shilling 1993:179).

John Baines and Peter Lacovara have referred to the mortuary practices of pharaonic Egypt as forming a “mausoleum culture,” and given the powerful associations of the tomb, this would seem a particularly apt description. Tombs were constructed largely during the tomb owner’s lifetime and as such were very much part of life—the superstructure being a visible and tangible reminder of one’s death and the hereafter. In principle, the tomb formed a concrete, yet liminal, installation for maintaining the deceased in life and one where the world of the living and dead overlapped. The preservation of the deceased’s mummified body, the grave goods, and the integrity of the tomb itself was fundamental (Baines and Lacovara 1996). The associated mortuary chapel also facilitated the mortuary cult, integral to the maintenance of the deceased. So the Egyptian cult of the dead incorporated various human reactions to loss and bereavement and culturally specific constructions of the self, the individual’s relationship with society and the cosmos, and afterlife beliefs. Despite this well-developed ideology concerning death and the hereafter, the texts reveal a profound scepticism about mortuary provision, the survival of monuments, and bodily destruction. The famous harpists’ songs proclaim that people should live for the day, because “no one who has gone has come back,” suggesting that all these elaborate earthly preparations were futile (Baines and Lacovara 1996). Baines (1991:129) comments that, in general, humanity had far more contact with the dead than they did with the gods. Moreover, in Egyptian thought, the life of the deceased resembles that of the living, and it is integrated within daily life and practices, such as rituals, oracles, magic, and intervention. In this way the material constructions (tombs, chapels, shrines, tomb goods), preparations (mummification), practices (domestic, mortuary, and commemorative rituals), and

beliefs (about the individual, death, afterlife, cosmology) combine to produce the Egyptian experience of death and memory.

*The West is a Land of Sleep
Darkness weighs on the dwelling place
Those who are there sleep in their mummy-forms
They wake not to see their brothers
They see not their fathers, their mothers
Their hearts forgot their wives, their children...
He snatches the son from his mother
Before the old man who walks by his side
Frightened they all plead before him
He turns not his ear to them...⁵*

Sex and Death

Death and its accompanying rituals and experiences have been a central focus of anthropology and have generated an attendant body of theory. One set of interesting and long-standing ideas surrounds concepts of rebirth in funerary rituals and the linkage between life and death. This has immediate relevance to the Egyptian context in terms of afterlife beliefs, the changing focus of tomb goods, and the preparation of bodies themselves. Indeed, fertility, rebirth, sexual potency, revivification, and appetite are all aspects of the association between sex and death. In the *Book of the Earth*, represented in the tomb of Ramesses VI, a procreative god is depicted with his phallus bound to the goddesses of the hours (Hornung 1990:85), linking sexuality and rejuvenation. Osiris also appears in his phallic form in the tomb of Ramesses IX. In the *Book of Day and Book of Night*, which was featured in Ramesside tombs, the deceased could be depicted as having an erection as the sun god passes and they revive from their deathly state. This reinforces that the body transcends death and maintains its fundamental character beyond the boundaries of death. It could also represent a reticence to accept the consequences of death and this is again reflected in the elaborate treatments of bodies in an attempt to sustain life; they are artifacts from the world of the living and visual representations of the living world and people in their alive state. These factors are clearly evident in Eighteenth Dynasty tombs, although we witness a shift in emphasis from the Nineteenth Dynasty onwards. Nonetheless, the connections between life, death, and sexuality are fundamentally important and ritual practice is the medium by which they are most often united.

Studies that sought to identify the link between sexuality and death as a cultural phenomenon started as early as 1859 with Bachofen, then Frazer in 1890, and Harrison

in 1911, followed by studies by anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard, Hertz, Goody, and Geertz. A major figure to develop these linkages from a philosophical and somewhat sweeping perspective was Georges Bataille (1986 [1957], 1993 [1976]). He argued that eroticism was primarily a religious matter, and feared that few would be strong enough to perceive the connection between the promise of life implicit in eroticism and the sensuous aspect of death (Bataille 1986:59). At their points of culmination both eroticism and death signified the boundless wastage of nature's resources. In the anthropological tradition, Bloch and Parry (1982) followed with their volume *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. Central to many of these interpretations was the double aspect of funerals, first proposed by Hertz (1960). In some societies this may entail burying the individual twice, secondary burial after excarnation or similar treatments, or, in the case of Egypt, a lengthy processing of the body after death and then a ritual interment. One aspect of Egyptian funerary and burial custom focuses on pollution and sorrow (embalming and preparation), whereas another centers on continuity and negation of death. The linkage between sex and death also involves the interplay of liminality, or liminal states. Van Gennep developed the notion of liminality upon which Victor Turner (1967) elaborated. Van Gennep (1960 [1909]) posited that one could expect rites of separation, transition, and incorporation respectively and found that rites of transition were those with the greatest duration and complexity and, as such, should be seen as autonomous. Where Egyptian perceptions might differ is with the state of the individual in this transitional phase. Many of the anthropological studies that cite the double aspect of the funeral also point to communal fear surrounding the state of the deceased, as a spirit, throughout this liminal phase. The transference of the soul from one domain to the other involves a dangerous period during which spirits are malevolent and socially uncontrollable. Thus, the funeral acts more for the living in perpetuating the status quo, rather than merely for the deceased (Bloch and Parry 1982:introduction). While the Egyptian texts do not explicitly state this view, it may be a point worth considering. Related to this idea are Egyptian notions of the "dangerous dead," which do figure strongly in the texts and in personal letters (Pinch 1994:45, 148). From the documentary evidence, it appears that the deceased individual can threaten or bless the living long after the period of death, preparation, and burial. Thus the liminal phase following death and the whole society of the dead are more dangerous than the living community. For the Egyptians, the deceased is incorporated into the realm

of the living and continues to be a potent force, unlike groups such as the Merina, for example (Bloch 1982), for whom the deceased is put to rest after the second burial. As a last point Whaley (1981) has posited a connection between biological fascination and knowledge of the body and its sexual association, although his study focuses upon the Enlightenment. He suggests that the symbolic link between sex and death emerges from a scientific preoccupation with the corpse. If this were the case, then we could argue for a similar interest in the body during pharaonic times, especially given the elaborate bodily practices undertaken after death.

Death rites are often commonly filled with the symbolism of birth, and this is true of the Egyptian context. In the Egyptian poem *The Tale of Sinuhe*, the protagonist says: "What matters more than being buried in the land where I was born?"⁶ and the recitations in the *Book of the Dead* frequently refer to the deceased being under the protection of their city gods who are invoked at some of the most crucial moments of the death ritual, such as chapter 23, the recitation at the Opening of the Mouth ritual: "My mouth is opened by Ptah, my mouth's bonds are loosed by my city god, Thoth has come fully equipped with my spells."⁷ The Opening of the Mouth ritual demonstrates some of the closest associations between death and (re)birth. Ann Macy Roth (1993) suggests that this ritual mimicked the birth and maturation of a child and its purpose was to take the newly reborn deceased through the transitions of birth and childhood, so that he or she could be nourished by the (adult) food amply provided in the Egyptian mortuary cult. The ritual implements used in the opening of the mouth may also have underscored links with practices at the moment of birth, when the child's mouth was opened to help with breathing.

So the moment of death is not simply related to the process of the afterlife, but deeply imbricated with life experience, concepts of aging, and the production of offspring. Death relates inextricably to life: specifically the recent life of the deceased and the lives of their offspring (Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991:108). Sexuality is also tied to these constructions, whether it be at Malagasy or Nyakyusa funerals, or in ancient Egyptian ones. Consider the tomb scenes of naked servants and dancing girls, the depictions of Hathor, and the fishing and fowling scenes replete with sexual puns (both visual and literary), which are a material reflection of continuing sexuality. These images were concrete (i.e., painted on tomb walls), not passing enactments, which stresses their continued importance for the deceased. As previously noted, it was thought that the deceased continued to be a sexual being with sexual needs and desires. Similarly, constitu-

ents of the self, such as the *ba*, were also thought to have bodily needs.

Women were indelibly associated with the sphere of death and funerals. While women are associated with fertility and sexuality, in many cultures they are given to dealing with aspects of pollution and mourning—the emotive dimension. Grieving was subject to a sexed difference: compared with the quiet attitudes of men in tomb iconography, the mourning gestures of the women display vehemence (Milde 1988:18). In various cultures crying at funerals is not only tolerated, but required by custom (Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991:44). Crying also occurs on cue. In New Kingdom Egypt, this performance was largely delegated to women as a form of profession,⁸ and it could be a hereditary one (Bleeker 1967:130; Tosi and Roccati 1972:88). If some women were paid for these displays they would be mediated by class or status prerogatives: many could not have afforded such displays. This is not to say that people—men, women, and children—were not individually moved to tears by the passing of a loved one and also present at the burial scene. Cross-culturally, the display of emotion is often designated a female domain, as in the cases of ritual lamentation in Greece (both ancient and modern) and among the Bara of Madagascar, the Nyakyusa of Africa (Metcalf and Huntingdon 1991:47), and modern Egyptian groups (Abu-Lughod 1986, 1993). There are obviously exceptions, and I am not suggesting an essentialist position in terms of emotive responses. Various groups do not display strong emotional responses at funerals, as Geertz (1973:153–62) documented for the Javanese. Attitudes to death across time are characterized by diverse emotions—fear, sorrow, anger, despair, resentment, resignation, defiance, pity, avarice, triumph, helplessness—and can manifest in a complex mixture for any individual (Whaley 1981:9). Taken together, this reaffirms theories of cultural specificity in terms of emotion, display, and mortuary ritual, which in turn reminds us that we are faced with both the strange and the familiar in our own world. And just as in our own culture, mourning in Egypt was directly linked to memorializing an individual and the various levels and time scales upon which social memory was operationalized.

Social Memory and Action

Determining what constituted social memory for the New Kingdom Egyptians relies not only upon the contingencies of preservation, but also upon the respective wealth and literacy of different classes. The concept of memory has recently attracted attention in Egyptological

research (Assmann 1992; Baines 1989, 1995; McDowell 1992), but the degree to which “social memory” in its broadest sense was a pervasive theme is debatable. Jan Assmann (1992) would like to stress the importance of memory in general terms for Egyptian civilization. However, he fails to stress that long-term memory operates as a social device that structures and legitimates inequalities (see Baines and Lacovara 1996). Remembering and deifying an elite individual such as a pharaoh entails different sentiments and practices from those that ordinary villagers might have engaged in. We can separate out two overlapping spheres of remembrance. First is the recording of specific generations in tombs or on stelae. The second is more immaterial and relates to practices enacted on feast days, festivals, or other auspicious occasions in which deceased relatives were invoked or celebrated in various ways. However, there are some material correlates for these practices, such as the ancestor busts and stelae found at domestic sites like Deir el Medina and Gurob.

An example of the first type of commemorative practice can be found in a rather unusual tomb, that of Paheri at el Kab (Tylor and Griffith 1894). Here five generations are depicted, signifying the importance of the extended family in the mortuary realm. Only occasionally are grandparents recorded in tombs, sometimes on both maternal and paternal sides. In the tomb of Paheri a significant amount of genealogical data is included: his wife, sons and daughter, grandchildren (their names are now missing), father and mother, brothers and sisters, grandmother and grandfather, his grandmother’s sisters, his mother’s brothers, his wife’s father and mother, his wife’s sisters and brothers, and even his wife’s cousin (Whale 1989:70–71). A total of five generations are depicted here and another two are known from the tomb of his grandfather, Ahmose son of Ibana. Iconographically, some of Paheri’s female relatives take precedence over their male siblings: the eldest daughter takes precedence over some of the sons represented. A rare example of multiple generations comes from a stela set up to commemorate the stonemason Bakenmin (UC 14362 in Stewart 1976) from Deir el Medina. Represented are twenty-three members of his family across four generations. More generally, Andrea McDowell (1992:106) demonstrated that communities such as that of Deir el Medina had a very limited sense of the past and could remember scarcely more than two generations back for their own commemorative family practices. There are very few written references to events even as recent as twenty years in the past. In fact the Egyptians had no cult of ancestor worship as witnessed in other cultures

(Gardiner 1935:8); it was the king and the gods who were crucial (Baines and Lacovara 1996).

And yet the Egyptians had a strong sense of the past; they were surrounded by its materiality, but it did not always evoke feelings of reverence. At Deir el Medina, the villagers incorporated older funerary monuments in new constructions and regularly robbed tombs in the process of burial preparations. As John Baines (1995) perceptively remarks, “In the vital area of the world of the dead, they inhabited and aspired to inhabit a doubly dead landscape in which the funerary monuments around them provided a model of achievement, even in their decayed form, as well as a physical environment into which they awkwardly inserted their current passage to a deceased status through destruction, usurpation, and reuse.” The tomb has often been portrayed as sacred ground, an impermeable structure respected by Egyptians that was perhaps even feared as the repository of danger and destructive spells. Yet we know that tombs were vandalized and desecrated throughout pharaonic times. Moreover, priests as well as ordinary workmen were capable of breaking into the royal tombs and stealing the possessions of the deceased. As a deterrent, there may have been a perceived threat from the deceased and there was certainly the severest of punishments here on earth for those who were caught. Tomb robbing also existed at sites where graves were more meagre and goods less numerous, such as cemeteries for middle- and lower-class individuals. Another related process was the reuse of older tombs, which is widely attested at sites like Deir el Medina. Ostrakon BM 5624 illustrates the practice of officially regulated tomb reuse usually after a family line had died out, although reallocation did not always proceed smoothly. Amenemope retells how he asked, “Direct (me) to a tomb among the ancestors! He gave me the tomb of Khay through a writing and I began to work in it.”⁹ The reuse of tombs was significant because of the distinct associations with their symbolic import and location, not to mention the overall reduction in labor and expense. Despite this seeming disregard for the realm of the dead, the Egyptians had an ability, like those of many modern societies, to assimilate conflicting, or opposing, conceptions that enabled them to maintain both idealizing and rationalizing views of death and the dead (Baines and Lacovara 1996).

The second form of commemoration, also well attested at Deir el Medina, combined ritual practices and festivals that perpetuated the memory of deceased family members for a generation or two at most. This took place in the mortuary sphere, whether in chapels or in the vicinity of the tomb, as well as in the domestic sphere

(see Friedman 1985; Meskell 1998b). Visits to the chapel involved a mutual interchange of favors. The tomb owner received visits and allegiance, offering formulae were said on his behalf; the visitor received the protection of the tomb owner, who interceded on his behalf (Nordh 1996:12). This practice of exchange was multidimensional, encompassing what we would term intellectual, religious, emotional, and behavioral aspects. The idea of a living memorial is an important one that could be seen as embodied in the notion of constructing a tomb with a visible pyramid, chapel, and courtyard like those at Deir el Medina. The tomb was a testament to the deceased, his life history, and his achievements: women could not be included in this specific construction of the "biography" because they did not hold official offices. The necropolis was also the most potent locale where the dead held the greatest influence. Letters to the dead were left there, and it was also the place where magical texts, written and visual, were believed to have the greatest efficacy. The necropolis seems to have been the obvious and optimum zone for contact between the two worlds.

Religious festivals also actualized belief and stimulated social memory; they were not simply social celebrations. They acted in a multiplicity of related spheres. There were festivals of the gods, of the king, and of the dead. As we have seen, dead individuals were mourned and their benevolence desired. Bleeker (1967:137) argued that, like certain other festivals, the well-attested "Beautiful Festival of the Wadi" was a key example of a festival of the dead, which took place between the harvest and the Nile flood. During the festival the divine boat of Amun traveled from the Karnak temple to the necropolis of Western Thebes. A large procession followed and both the living and dead were thought to commune near the graves, which became "houses of the joy of the heart" on that occasion. Supposedly the images of deceased individuals were taken along in the procession and then returned to the grave. On a smaller scale, a family festival also took place in which the deceased took part. In this way a link was forged between celebrating the gods and the dead in a single all-encompassing event. From the iconographic sources, festivals and funerals had much in common: emotive displays, ritual meals, the smashing of pots ritual, processions, the use of symbolically potent flowers, musicians, and so on (see Meskell 2001).

While this sets the scene for the Egyptian cultural milieu, memory is only one arena. Bodily practices in the mortuary sphere are another salient aspect and, as famously stated, bodies themselves have a history. Previously I have concentrated on the body of the deceased

and its various transmutations during death, burial, and beyond. However, the bodies of relatives and mourners were also transformed through the experience of death. We have to reconstitute such practices from tomb reliefs, which also served as a permanent testament to an individual's life and death. This relates to the second form of commemorative action discussed above. The tomb chapel served for long-term reminders, whereas personalized scenes often lay inside the sealed burial chambers. Tomb iconography and their accompanying texts suggest a strongly contoured division between gendered mourning practices. From the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Renni at el Kab, one can see the bodily rendering of grief and read the laments of his three daughters. One daughter cries, "Where are you going my father?"¹⁰ His wife asks, "Where should I go oh my master, for eternity?"¹¹ Loss and despair were expressed more frequently by female relatives. The specific recording of these moments of grief fixed individual responses and memories literally in stone, for eternity. They were of the moment and of perpetual time simultaneously, fitting more closely with an Egyptian sense of time as being both linear and cyclical. Time was conceived as a spiral of patterned repetitions, a coil of countless rebirths.

In some New Kingdom tomb scenes mourning women wear strips of blue cloth tied around their heads to mark the immediate household of the deceased, a custom with analogues in modern times. Other more transient practices occurred, such as scratching the face, heaping dust or earth on the head, and the rending of hair and garments (D'Auria et al. 1988:56). The mourner was said to be "head-upon-knee." The baring of the breasts was a further sign of emotional distress, and was not a normal mode of dress for elite women. One vignette from the Papyrus of Ani shows a grieving wife kneeling next to his coffin, wearing a dress of dark linen that exposes her breasts. That the living, grieving body is modified might suggest a parallel to the dead body in its transitional phase. The disheveling of the hair, face, and body may relate to concepts of disorder, denial of bodily existence, and the inevitability of the death of the physical body in this world. There is an extensive corpus of writing on the symbolism of hair (Eilberg-Schwartz and Doniger 1995), especially in its ritual associations, and this was no doubt loaded with meanings revolving around sex and death. Despite the stylization, such an open display of what would normally be perceived as antisocial, primitive behavior may have actually enhanced the experiential, emotive, or even eroticized state of the mourners: it made grief embodied and palpable.

Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to interweave a number of relevant themes surrounding death and memory using archaeological, iconographic, and textual sources dating to the New Kingdom. To begin with I have argued that modern sociological accounts of death fail to accord ancient societies the emotive dimension of death: the individual was mourned, buried, and remembered in meaningful ways within Egyptian culture (cf. Joyce this volume). Although a well-developed ideology was constructed to account for bodily death and the hereafter, the Egyptians still feared death and sometimes expressed nihilistic sentiments about the future. From cultural and textual data it is possible to reconstruct Egyptian views on the self as multiply constituted. There were many facets of the self in death; individuals were partible, divisible, and each somatic identity was considered active. In transcending death they operated as intentional and powerful agents, creating links between living and dead members of the community, and this was well attested at Deir el Medina. Through New Kingdom sources, I suggest that the incidents of death involved significant numbers of villagers. Individual members grieved, performed mortuary rituals, and buried their dead. Additionally, female mourners were hired for more elaborate funerary displays. But before those practices were undertaken, builders had constructed the tomb, scribes had decorated it, artisans had created shrines, statues, and the material culture of death itself, and others had embalmed the dead. An entire array of individuals was indelibly involved, some emotionally linked, others linked by social and economic forces. Women played significant roles in the social drama of death, not only in funerary preparations and grieving, but also conceptually in the revivification process itself. A successful burial and afterlife was ensured through the invocation of sexualized practices—at least for men. Whether it be mythological, iconographic, or ideological, the connection between sex and death was a foundational one.

Finally, the ancestors were ever present in living experiences and negotiations, whether in the domestic setting or coalescing around tombs and chapels. Egyptian mortuary practices also extended beyond interment. Commemoration and memorialization were fundamental to both a successful afterlife (for the dead) and a prosperous earthly existence (for the living). Feasts and festivals, often inflected with the imagery of funerals, provided the forum for remembering and calling upon deceased kin. Although ritual libations, prayers, and memorializing practices were supposed to be enacted in perpetuity,

this was an impossible task. Textual evidence suggests that for many middle-class groups social memory extended over a generation or two at most. Perhaps the construction of permanent representations on commemorative stelae and tomb walls substituted for the intangibles of the human world. Cycles of life and death were strongly contoured and inextricably linked in Egyptian society, and equally as complex and deserving of study as those of any modern context.

*A night vigil will be assigned to you, with holy oils
and wrappings from the hands of Tayet.
A funeral procession will be made for you on the
day of joining the earth,
with a mummy case of gold,
a mask of lapis lazuli,
a heaven over you, and you placed in a hearse,
with oxen dragging you,
and singers before you.
The dance of the Oblivious ones will be done at the
mouth of your tomb-chamber
and the offering-invocation recited for you;
sacrifices will be made at the mouth of your
offering-chapel,
and your pillars will be built of white stone.¹³*

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Notes

1. Taken from the Middle Kingdom literary text known as the *The Dialogue of a Man and His Soul* (Parkinson 1997). Although this text dates to the Middle Kingdom, such texts had a long history in Egyptian culture, and many are known from Deir el Medina.
2. Translation from Lichtheim (1976:12).
3. O. Louvre 698 vs. 12–22, translation from McDowell (1999:106); see also Wentz (1990:217–19).
4. Bloch and Parry (1982:15–16) refer cross-culturally to notions of the good death as that of an individual who has been pious and dutiful in life, with subsequent

receipt of the proper burial ritual—a scenario parallel with ancient Egyptian conceptions. A good death promises a rebirth for the individual, whilst a bad death represents the loss of regenerative powers.

5. From the Stela of Taimhotep, translated by Miriam Lichtheim (1980:63).

6. Translation from Parkinson (1997:34).

7. Translation from Lichtheim (1976:120).

8. For example, the wailing women in the tomb of Neferhotep (Zandee 1960:45); see also stela Turin 50053.

9. Translation from McDowell (1999:68).

10. From the tomb of Renni at el Kab (Lüdeckens 1943:37–38), translation by Roland Enmarch.

11. From the Theban tomb of Neferhotep (Lüdeckens 1943:109–10), translation by Roland Enmarch.

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Death, Gender, and the Chumash Peoples: Mourning Ceremonialism as an Integrative Mechanism

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In this chapter I consider the mortuary practices of the Indigenous people of the Santa Barbara Channel area, ancestral to the peoples known today as Chumash. Among these peoples, mortuary ceremonialism was apparently employed on a geographically far-ranging but temporally limited basis, acting as an integrative mechanism that brought together large numbers of people over a wide physical area, but only briefly, to mark the death of any single person. Significant deviations from this practice are considered, as are the anthropological and archaeological implications of such mortuary symbolism.

The archaeological implications of these social phenomena have bearing on other current questions about prehistoric societies in the Santa Barbara Channel area. Debates concerning the timing and nature of emerging organizational complexity among ancestral Chumash groups may be informed by a consideration of mortuary practices. For example, the ability to detect hereditary ascribed status relies in large part upon the analysis of burials and accompanying artifacts; the antiquity of these aspects of social organization is a critical issue in recent debates about the development of simple chiefdoms among Chumash groups (see Gamble et al. In press for a summary of these hypotheses).

While certain features of material culture will be considered here, the archaeological implications of this discussion focus more on the ways in which mortuary practices among Chumash peoples and their ancestors reflect aspects of social organization. My primary concern here is to elucidate the processes of these mortuary practices, and thereby to provide additional information for their interpretation by contemporary archaeologists. A critical issue, therefore, is the amount of variation in mortuary practices from one Chumash group to another, and how this variation manifested itself along the major axes of social organization, such as gender, age, and so-

cial status. For example, an important symbolic component of mourning ceremonialism among Chumash groups is gender. Gender appears to not have been of crucial importance for the treatment of individual burials, but mortuary symbolism is permeated by gendered concepts and actors, such as deities, ritual practitioners, and the mapping of cosmological (i.e., eschatological) space. It is possible that the fundamental elements of eschatological concepts among Chumash peoples were widespread and can to some extent be reconstructed from existing ethnographic, ethnohistoric, and archaeological information (see Hudson and Blackburn 1978:246). Thus, mourning ceremonialism throughout the region may have acted as an integrative mechanism that brought together disparate communities and superseded local (village) ethnic identities. As such, these mortuary activities are of critical importance for our understanding of the ways in which social identities are formed, reinforced, and marked by the living community, for the dead.

A contemporary analogy of this principle can be seen in the mourning behavior exhibited throughout the world at the death of Diana, Princess of Wales: mourning became a truly international phenomenon, uniting those who identified with her based on nationality or her status as a divorced woman and single mother, a survivor of eating disorders, or champion of those whom society marginalizes, such as AIDS patients, landmine victims, and terminally ill children (see Griffin 1999; Hockey and James 1999). What has been termed "the Diana event" (Davies 1999:3) is rivaled in contemporary social memory perhaps only by the death of John F. Kennedy, in the construction of spontaneous shrines (Chandler 1999; Haney and Davis 1999), the outpouring of grief in condolence books (Jones 1999), and the elevation of a mortal person to a mythical symbol in a secular religion (Harris 1999). While archaeological, ethnographic, and

ethnohistoric examples of these phenomena among ancestral Chumash groups certainly operated at a smaller geographical scale, the social aspects of these behaviors are quite comparable. The various ways in which the living identify with the deceased are given expression in mortuary symbolism; these symbols, and their variations among Chumash groups, are the focus of this discussion.

The first point for consideration is the anthropological “reality” of the category “Chumash,” and its relevance to the discussion of variations in mortuary practices. Next, I describe the major aspects of mortuary behavior, particularly with regard to the reflection of social identities in mortuary (i.e., burial) contexts. The ways in which these mortuary behaviors brought together elements of Chumash society, in the broad sense, are discussed with reference to integrative mechanisms, such as the *ʔantap* religion, occupational guilds, and mourning ceremonialism. Following this discussion, the gendered aspects of Chumash eschatological concepts, and their importance for the construction of social memory, are examined. Finally, the archaeological implications of these rituals are considered. Death in a Chumash community involved many relationships simultaneously or sequentially: those between the earthly realm and the supernatural, those between an individual and his or her village community, and those among communities throughout the region. These relationships, and their integrative functions, are discussed in this chapter.

The Chumash as an Anthropological Category

Recent debates in the anthropological literature have concerned the role played by anthropologists in the “process of identity negotiation” and the establishment of a bounded Chumash identity (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997:761, 767; see also Erlandson 1998; Haley and Wilcoxon 1999). Following these larger theoretical and methodological issues, Haley and Wilcoxon (1999) have attempted to reevaluate the validity and appropriateness of the use of the “broad anthropological category of Chumash,” specifically by means of a substantial reinterpretation of various aspects of Chumash eschatological concepts (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997, 1999). These authors point out that there is considerable variation in the beliefs about the Land of the Dead, the soul’s journey there, and the location(s) of the departure points for the dead: these variations most likely reflect cultural differences at the local (i.e., village) or regional (i.e., linguistic) level (Haley and Wilcoxon 1997, 1999).

These forms of cultural variation have often been lumped into a generic “Chumash” whole, ignoring the possibility of substantial differences in beliefs and practices from one Chumash group to another. Haley and Wilcoxon (1999:228) note that several authors, beginning with Powell (1891:67), have asserted that group identification among Chumash-language speakers was primarily at the village level (Johnson 1988:289–97; McLendon and Johnson 1999:6–8). In essence, this is comparable to the village community or “tribelet” defined by Kroeber (1925, 1932, 1962; see also Lightfoot 1994) as the characteristic form of sociopolitical organization in aboriginal California. Patterns of intervillage warfare, village exogamy, and marital alliances between pairs of villages in Chumash territory support the interpretation that this was a more important organizing principle than any larger “Chumash” identity (see Blackburn 1975:8–15; Glassow and Wilcoxon 1988; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997:767–68; Johnson 1988; Kroeber 1910, 1925; Lambert 1994; a similar argument could be made for the category labeled “Pomo” by anthropologists and linguists [Kroeber 1932:258, 1962:38; Silliman 1996:14]).

The relationship between groups documented ethnohistorically and/or ethnographically and those represented by the archaeological record is not always straightforward or easily understood. Caution must be exercised in the interpretation of any ethnographic or ethnohistoric data, particularly with regard to the reconstruction of precontact practices and beliefs. The amount of time that had elapsed between precontact conditions and the time of ethnographic work with Chumash persons is especially troublesome in the case of John P. Harrington’s material: he worked primarily with elderly persons during the 1910s (Blackburn 1975:5–6) who had been born after the Spanish missions were secularized. In no case did he work with anyone alive during the pre-Mission period. Influences from other cultures, such as the Spanish, the Mexicans, and the Americans, and particularly the role of Catholicism, have perhaps been underestimated, or at the very least downplayed by anthropologists (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1997:773, 1999:213). Indeed, Fernando Librado *Kitsepawit* (his Chumash name; hereafter Librado), Harrington’s most important Ventureño consultant, noted that elements of mourning ritual changed “after the Indians were Christianized” and were no longer what they had been in “heathen days” (Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:230). Nevertheless, valuable information concerning the importance of mourning ceremonialism can be gleaned from these sources; this evidence is used here as an interpre-

tive base for the analysis of archaeological data, especially as a source of hypotheses that can be tested against the archaeological record.

Santa Barbara Channel Area Prehistory and History

The evolution of prehistoric Chumash peoples culminated in a level of complexity unusual for nonagriculturalists (Arnold 1992; Johnson 1988; Kroeber 1925). During late prehistoric times, Chumash groups were characterized by a simple chiefdom-level political organization that integrated densely populated coastal villages (Arnold 1987); the timing and nature of the emergence of this complexity is currently debated by archaeologists. These villages were supported by a maritime subsistence economy and by extensive trade networks that incorporated the Northern Channel Islands, the coastal mainland, and interior regions (C. King 1990; see below).

Immediately prior to European contact (A.D. 1542), Chumash societies were dominated by political, religious, and economic elites, who were members of hereditary craft guilds and/or the *`antap* society, which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. This religious/political organization operated on both the local and regional levels, with village chiefs and their families serving as obligatory members, along with other ritual specialists, such as “weather doctors,” experts on astronomy, and others with access to special or restricted knowledge. The overlapping power structure of ritual and secular roles provided Chumash peoples with a flexible organizational framework, and ensured that only “baptized” members of the *`antap* society had access to information and esoteric knowledge, the ultimate source of power in Native California societies (Hudson et al. 1981:100–101; see also Blackburn 1976 and Bean 1976; see below).

Apparently, many statuses were recognized in late prehistoric times. Evidence from oral traditions, ethnohistoric sources, and archaeological data indicates that certain social identities were marked among the living and the dead. In particular, some political, economic, and religious identities appear to have been very important among these societies, such as *wot* (chief), various ritual practitioners (doctors or shamans), and specific occupational specialists. Harrington’s twentieth-century consultants referred to this class of people as “nobility” (King 1969:45). Such statuses or roles have been identified in mortuary contexts throughout the Santa Barbara Channel area (see Gamble et al. In press; Hollimon 1990; C. King 1990; L. King 1982; Martz 1984).

Social Identities in Mortuary Contexts

The previously described social identities have been recognized, on the basis of burial accompaniments, in several prehistoric and historic-period cemeteries throughout the Chumash region. Despite the apparently widespread practice of destroying the majority of the deceased’s property at or near the time of death, at least among commoners (King 1969, 1982), some statuses were marked in the grave. For example, the symbolic use of burial offerings to reinforce social boundaries is suggested by the distribution of plank canoe parts in the historic-period Malibu cemetery, suggesting that “canoemaker” was an important social identity deemed worthy of particular mortuary treatment (Gamble et al. In press). Caution must be exercised in the interpretation of these burial accompaniments, but the use of ethnographic and ethnohistoric information supports the assumption that certain identities were emphasized through mortuary practices (see Gamble et al. In press).

It is therefore possible to discuss the bases upon which some social, economic, political, or religious identities would be marked in mortuary contexts. In an oversimplification, a spectrum of mortuary treatments can be depicted from the “simplest,” involving the fewest number of people and smallest expense, the least elaborate burial treatment, and so on, to the “most complex,” involving the greatest number of people and expense, the most elaborate burial treatment, and so on (see Figure 4.1).

In the following discussion, I briefly describe the main aspects of mortuary behaviors that would vary along the dimension of social identity or status. The burial of an average person, that of a socially prominent person, and the large-scale periodic mourning ceremony are examined with regard to the ways in which social elements were integrated by mortuary practices.

Burial of an Average Individual

In the case of an average individual (“commoner”), it is probable that the only attendants at the burial would have been the immediate family of the deceased and those responsible for digging the grave, burying the corpse, and conducting graveside rituals (see Blackburn 1975:14; Hudson and Blackburn 1986:70). The “wake,” held before burial, and the graveside mourning ceremony, were presided over by the *`aqi*, or undertakers, and perhaps singers of ritual songs. The *`aqi* were occupational specialists who may have belonged to a third gender, were professionals who were paid for their services, and were members of a secret society or guild (King 1982:74; see

<u>Number of persons attending:</u>		
<i>fewest</i>		<i>greatest</i>
Burial of a “commoner”	Chief’s funeral	Shihuch
<u>Number of ritual specialists involved:</u>		
<i>fewest</i>		<i>greatest</i>
Burial of a “commoner”	Chief’s funeral	Shihuch
<u>Composition of mourning groups:</u>		
Burial of a “commoner”	Chief’s funeral	Shihuch
— <i>aqi</i> and family	— <i>antap</i> and villagers	—multiple village communities
<u>Amount of integration:</u>		
<i>least</i>		<i>greatest</i>
Burial of a “commoner”	Chief’s funeral	Shihuch
—family	—village	—linguistic/ethnic regional
<u>Number of mourners per deceased individual:</u>		
<i>fewest</i>		<i>greatest</i>
Burial of a “commoner”	Shihuch	Chief’s funeral

Figure 4.1. Spectrum of mortuary treatment.

also Hollimon 1997, 2000; see below). Among the Ventureño, the “wake” was held the fifth day after death: in a ceremony after midnight on the fifth day, between four and six women would stand and sing, marking time with their feet, accompanied by the shaking of deerhoof rattles (Harrington 1921, 1942; Hudson et al. 1981:105, n. 64; King 1969:50).

Ethnographic evidence suggests that commoners typically had few grave goods placed in their burials and that the presence of burial accompaniments most likely reflected statuses of family members who placed personal items of their own in the grave (King 1969). This practice is reflected in the Inezeño Chumash word that specifically refers to the practice of burning the deceased’s effects: the word means “belongings of the dead, to be burned” (Applegate 1972:93). Apparently, this practice varied throughout the Chumash region (King 1969:51) and may have been limited to high-status individuals (Heizer 1955:157). The rationale given for this practice was to destroy every reminder of the dead person (Heizer 1955:157), an interesting implication for the inability to commemorate the dead on a long-term basis, and in considering the concept of social memory.

A Ventureño consultant stated that the only reason for the destruction of property was “the desire to get rid of everything that should recall the deceased to the memories of his friends” (Heizer 1955:157). An Inezeño consultant observed that “what they did not bury with the person they destroyed so there would be nothing left that belonged to that person” (King 1969:52). This statement perhaps implies that the destruction of the

deceased’s property was necessary to ensure that the dead would not come back for their belongings. Apparently, some of the property of the deceased could also be disposed of at a local shrine, which may have been generically (perhaps regionally) referred to as the “Depository of the Things of the Dead” (Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:218, 220; Hudson et al. 1981:62–63; Hudson and Blackburn 1986:84–90).

Archaeological confirmation comes from throughout the Chumash area: many burials lack grave goods entirely, while the majority of others contain only a few accompaniments, and the minority have an abundance of burial artifacts (see Gamble et al. In press; Hollimon 1990; C. King 1990; L. King 1969, 1982; Martz 1984). This is in keeping with ethnographic information, which indicates that many Inezeño graves went unmarked above the surface, and that “those who could afford it had a grave pole on them. Poor people could not afford to put the pole up” (Hudson and Blackburn 1986:73). As Gamble and colleagues note:

Whatever the disposition of the dead person’s personal belongings, it seems likely that the artifacts the Chumash interred with a body serve an important role as a symbolic expression by the living community of the social relationships that have been disrupted by death. (Gamble et al. In press)

Burial of a Socially Important Individual

The burial of a wealthy or politically or ritually important person, such as a chief, occupational specialist,

or other *`antap* member, would involve larger numbers of people and greater economic expense. In 1769, Costansó, the chronicler of the Portolá expedition, described the burial of a chief, in which high poles were placed in the cemetery to denote the status of the deceased; the ceremony was said to have been conducted with “much pomp” (Hemert-Engert and Teggart 1910:137). In 1770, a Spanish missionary described a similar chiefly funeral:

We found the whole town, men, women and children, all gathered together and weeping loudly...with one or two of their chiefs, the heathens continued in their ceremony of crying without stopping or disturbance. There must not have been under four or five hundred souls gathered together. (Brown 1999)

In addition, the dead man was shrouded in a rabbit-skin cape and was adorned with lengths of strung beads, which served as a form of currency (Brown 1999). These observations indicate that burials of socially important persons were large events, attended by great numbers of mourners, conducted by ritual specialists, and involving great expense.

The public mourning ceremony held for some socially prominent persons, such as the *wot* (chief), had several features in common with the periodic mourning ceremony (*shihuch*) held for the community at large. Ethnographic sources describe the public mourning ceremony of a Ventureño chief, which was held at least one year after his death. Guests were invited from several communities, and there was feasting, singing, and dancing. The chief's clothing, in the form of a funeral effigy (*mono*), was burned on the ritual fire, and mourners danced about the fire, weeping and throwing in offerings of food, shell bead money, and other items. Any remaining possessions of the deceased were also burned at this time (Hudson and Blackburn 1986:266; Hudson and Underhay 1978:46–48). The ceremony lasted five days, after which guests departed for their homes and the fire hole was filled in with earth (Blackburn 1963:146).

In addition to these activities, an elaborately decorated grave pole (*sq`oq`om*) was erected at the mourning ceremony for a chief or other wealthy, important person among the Inezeño, Barbareño, and Ventureño (Harrington 1942; Hudson and Blackburn 1986:78–82). Attending guests helped pay for the pole's construction and decoration, which stood for the duration of the ceremony, usually about five days. After the conclusion of the ceremony, the pole was placed at the head of the person's grave (Hudson and Blackburn 1986:78). An Inezeño consultant stated that “it cost much” to erect a

pole and that it “marked the grave of distinguished persons” (Hudson and Blackburn 1986:79), suggesting that this feature was restricted to the graves of the social and economic elite.

During the burials of wealthy Chumash, the *`aqi* were overpaid for their services, in order to ensure good luck for the deceased's trip to the afterlife (King 1969:50). In addition, one form of payment for the undertakers was with unused baskets, and it is suggested that the deeper the grave, the greater the number of baskets that had to be provided to the undertakers (King 1982:74). This association between grave depth and the economic withdrawal to hire undertakers has been confirmed archaeologically: burials in the Medea Creek (King 1969:35) and historic Malibu cemeteries (Gamble et al. In press) show a positive correlation between depth of grave and number of artifacts contained therein.

Periodic Mourning Ceremony

The periodic mourning ceremony, called *shihuch* (“big fire”) in Ventureño, was held every few years for those who had died since the last ceremony; its planning might take up to two years, in order to gather enough food and money for the expensive event (Hudson et al. 1981:104, n. 53). A procession of banner-carriers marched around a large pit where numerous items, including beads, money, and the banners, would be burned. After the fire had burnt out, the area was covered with dirt, and a pole, called “the pillar of the sun,” was placed in the center (Hudson et al. 1981:47–48; see below for a discussion of poles used in other ritual contexts). This pole served as a centerpiece for ceremonial action conducted by ritual specialists, and experienced by the populace: “Following the erection of this pole each Indian family marched three times around it” (Hudson et al. 1981:48).

Following this portion of the ceremony, the ritual specialist known as the *paha* presided over the symbolic washing of the attendees. He held a basket dish containing “the tears of the Sun,” and made ritual pronouncements in the four cardinal directions (Hudson et al. 1981:48–49).

Comparisons

This idealized spectrum of burial and mortuary treatment allows the comparison of various social identities, and their memorialization, among Chumash groups. The focus of the community on the memorialization of a single individual, such as the *wot*, took place in the context of that person's funeral (and/or burial) and a public

mourning ceremony held within the year following death. Average persons collectively experienced similar memorialization, but the participating mourners at the *shihuch* would represent a smaller per capita focus; dozens of persons may have been mourned in such a ceremony, but perhaps only a few mourners represented each deceased individual.

What implications do such treatments have for the construction of social memory among Chumash groups? Apparently, there was a correspondence between a person's living identity and one that would be carried over to an existence in the afterlife. Despite a few notable examples of inversion, oral narratives describe a social order in the Land of the Dead that mimics the organization of Chumash societies (Blackburn 1975:32–36). Furthermore, ethnographic information from the twentieth century suggests a generalized concept of the afterlife as a place inhabited by the souls of those who had led moral lives:

The memory of the deceased depends upon his acts in life. If the deceased was a good man and did many kind acts, his memory would be held in high esteem—but if unjust would remember him as such [*sic*], showing that the people had proper regard for good and bad. (Librado quoted in Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:218)

Political or religious elites would most likely be those whose “good acts” affected the greatest number of community members, in the context of sponsoring large ceremonial events, redistributing monetary and food surpluses, and ensuring the psychological and physical health of individuals and the community as a whole. Thus, the memorialization of elites would command a greater focus of attention throughout the community, and perhaps beyond, than the mourning of those whose deeds may have affected smaller numbers of persons.

Integrative Mechanisms among Chumash Groups

Despite the importance of village-level organization among Chumash groups, there were apparently a number of integrative mechanisms that brought together villagers throughout the larger region inhabited by speakers of Chumash languages, and perhaps beyond (Blackburn 1976:231, 236–37). The integrative mechanisms under consideration here are the religious/political organization known as the *`antap* society; occupational guilds; and mourning ceremonialism. The *`antap* society and occupational guilds have been discussed at length elsewhere, so they will be discussed briefly here, with more attention paid to mourning rituals as integrative mecha-

nisms. Perhaps significantly, both the *`antap* organization and an occupational guild played large roles in the scheduling and performance of mortuary rituals among Chumash groups.

Blackburn (1976:233) notes that among the Chumash peoples, many ritual occasions were observed, ranging from the small, sporadic, or private rites, to the large and public ceremonials that involved complex social, economic, and political interaction. He states:

The intensity of ceremonialism in aboriginal life must have been pronounced, and it seems likely that there were few occasions during the course of the year when the life of the average person was not touched, directly or indirectly, by its social or economic concomitants. (Blackburn 1976:233)

These concomitants included furnishing accommodations for visiting guests, providing food for feasts, and supplying goods, such as clothing, shell bead money, baskets, and other items to be burned in the ritual fire at a mourning ceremony.

The widespread distribution of comparable religious beliefs throughout south-central California is an indication of the ceremonial interaction that operated on multiple levels (Hudson and Blackburn 1978:225). In addition to the local *`antap* members in each sizable Chumash village, the society existed on the provincial level also (Blackburn 1976:236; Hudson and Underhay 1978:29), and even cross-cut linguistic boundaries (Hudson and Blackburn 1978:238; Hudson and Underhay 1978:27, 32). The virtually identical terminology used to identify ritual specialists throughout the region lends support to this interpretation and suggests panethnic interaction in ceremonial contexts (Hudson and Blackburn 1978:238–40).

Perhaps, then, certain statuses, such as chief or shaman, were recognized on many different levels simultaneously: a person might distinguish the chief of his or her village, the chief of another Chumash village, the chief of a village of Yokuts-speakers, and so on. For example, at a ceremony held in 1869 by Pomposa, a woman who served as *wot* (chief) of the Saticoy rancheria, guests, including other chiefs, attended from Malibu, Santa Barbara, Santa Inés, and San Fernando, among other locations (Blackburn 1976:241; Hudson et al. 1981:91); at the mourning ceremony for a Ventureño chief, guests included Barbareño, Fernandeno, and even Takic-speaking Tongva people from south of Chumash territory (Hudson and Blackburn 1986:266). These examples highlight the importance of political and ceremonial interaction throughout Chumash and neighboring regions. Under these circumstances, it is possible to understand the overarching aspects of mourning ceremoni-

alism that transcended tribelet (ethnic) or even linguistic identities. As Hudson and Blackburn (1978:225) note:

Complex mythologies, elaborate cosmographies, and interlocking belief systems served to link both the individual and the community with the realm of the sacred, and in turn were given dramatic expression (in both concrete and abstract form) by shamans, priests, and various other ritualists.

The specific functions of the ritual practitioners in the *`antap* society are considered next.

`Antap

Prior to contact with Europeans, coastal and Channel Island Chumash societies were dominated by the political/religious organization known as *`antap*, whose members included local hereditary chiefs, economic elites, and members of specific craft guilds (Blackburn 1975:13, 1976:237). At least twelve *`antap* officials dwelled in every major village, and they often participated in rituals in widely scattered locations. The *`antap* organization acted as an integrative mechanism throughout Chumash-speaking regions, in that chiefs, other political officers, shamans, and economic elites were obligatory members of a wide-reaching religious society responsible for economic redistribution, the performance of dances and other rituals at large public gatherings, and other duties (Blackburn 1976:236–37).

Several ritual specialists were members of the *`antap* organization, including astronomers/astrologers, curing doctors, weather shamans, experts on the human skeleton, and others (see Blackburn 1976, Hudson 1979, Hudson et al. 1981, Hudson and Underhay 1978:29–38, and Walker and Hudson 1993:41–60 for further descriptions of the *`antap* specialists). Members of the *`antap* society were designated during childhood and served an apprenticeship during which sacred songs and dances, an esoteric language, and other rituals were learned, setting them apart from the common folk (*`emechesh*); only “baptized” *`antap* could enter the *siliyik*, a small ritual enclosure erected for ceremonial activities (Blackburn 1976:236). This “class consciousness” among Chumash peoples appears to have been firmly entrenched by the contact period, given that many oral narratives recapitulate independent ethnographic sources that indicate great differences in wealth and social prestige among various echelons of Chumash society (Blackburn 1975:51).

This principle is exemplified by the comment made by Librado, who noted that “the *`antap* do not like the *`emechesh* [common people], for the *`emechesh* will learn

the secrets of their mysteries” (Hudson et al. 1981:19). The social distance between *`antap* officials and the populace was maintained, in part, by their access to restricted ritual knowledge that the majority of Chumash peoples did not enjoy. Although there was certainly regional variability among the Chumash in terms of cosmology and specific religious beliefs, it appears that all of the Chumash recognized the *`antap* society and distinguished commoners from the elite *`antap*, even in smaller peripheral settlements (Gamble et al. In press).

Occupational Guilds

Occupational guilds, or *gremios*, served as integrative mechanisms by uniting their members at the regional level. These networks recognized genealogical and fictive kin relationships, consolidating economic and social power among their members, and giving the *gremios* a “kinship veneer” that crosscut localized affiliations (Arnold 1992:71; Blackburn 1975:10, 1976:236–37; Hudson et al. 1978:155). As with *`antap* officials, wealth and prestige were accrued by members of these occupational or craft guilds, such as “The Brotherhood of the *Tomol*,” responsible for the manufacture and use of ocean-going plank canoes (Hudson et al. 1978). The detailed knowledge necessary for *tomol* construction was restricted in a way similar to *`antap* esoterica and imparted only to specially trained assistants who served as apprentices to master builders (Arnold 1992:71; Hudson et al. 1978:41). Librado commented that the *`altomolich* [canoemakers] “have learned how to do it under older men” and “an old canoemaker would have his helpers and he would allow no one else around” (Hudson et al. 1978:40).

`Aqi

An important group of occupational specialists among Chumash peoples were the *`aqi*, or undertakers. Ethnographic and ethnohistorical evidence suggests that at least some of the undertakers were members of a third gender (either third-gender males [“berdache”] or postmenopausal women). Apparently, a defining characteristic of the *`aqi* status was nonreproductive sexuality (see Hollimon 2000). Perhaps the mediation between death and the afterlife, and between human and supernatural realms, was entrusted by the Chumash to individuals who could not be harmed by symbolic pollution of the corpse, and who were no longer (or never had been) capable of giving birth (see Joyce and Claassen 1997:2–5; Hollimon 1997, 2000).

In many Native North American groups, the gender “positioned between” female and male was viewed as a reflection of a spiritual status intermediate between the earthly and supernatural realms, allowing third-gender persons to mediate between human and divine worlds (Hollimon 1997:183). Fulton and Anderson (1992:609) suggest that third-gender individuals in North America were in a unique position to act as spiritual intermediaries during three liminal events in human life: birth, marriage, and death. Because these events were fraught with supernatural danger, the main purpose of these spiritual practitioners was to maintain order and continuity in society (Fulton and Anderson 1992:609; Hollimon 1997:183).

During the Mission period, a number of individuals were identified as *joya* (= *`aqi*) in baptismal records. These documents give the natal village with all entries, as well as information about marriages and offspring. John Johnson’s (personal communication 1997) research on these records documents a number of *joyas* from several villages in Chumash and adjacent territory. One person came from Piru in Tataviam territory and was recorded at Mission San Fernando. The 1803 records at Mission La Purisima document a fifty-year-old who came from the village of “*Nomgio*” (modern Gaviota). The 1803 census at Mission Santa Barbara records a fifty-four-year-old who came from the village of *Siuxtun* (modern Santa Barbara), and the 1819 record from the same mission shows a thirty-three-year-old who was originally from the village of “*Cajats*” on Santa Cruz Island. These records, limited as they are, demonstrate the widespread distribution of *`aqi* throughout Chumash and neighboring territories, unlike other specialists who were tied to particular resources that were locally available. The distribution of *`aqi* more greatly resembles that of the members of the *`antap* society, who were found widely dispersed throughout the Chumash area, at least partially crosscutting local identities.

In addition to this similarity, the *`aqi* and *`antap* were ritual specialists with access to esoteric information and supernatural power that the average Chumash person did not enjoy. Their employment of restricted knowledge was at least partially for the benefit of all, given that they were important maintainers of the cosmic order; *`aqi* ensured that the dead would complete a journey to the afterlife and not harm the living (see King 1969:50), and the *`antap* were entrusted with significant ceremonial action that balanced sacred and secular realms (Blackburn 1976:235–37; see also Bean 1976:416–18; Flynn 1991:136).

Mourning Ceremonialism

A principal integrative mechanism among these groups was mourning ceremonialism, during which, simultaneously, foodstuffs and money were redistributed; political, religious, and economic power was reinforced in the hands of a few elites; and the cosmological order was maintained (Blackburn 1976:229, 233, 235–38; see also Kroeber 1925:859–60). In describing the “unholy alliance” of the chief and shaman among the neighboring Yokuts, a situation that likely obtained for Chumash groups as well (Blackburn 1976:233), Gayton (1930:377) notes:

The chief was, and was regarded as, the ceremonial leader of his community of whom it was said, “he gave this dance,” “he made that mourning ceremony,” etc., in spite of the fact that it was the public at large who paid for them. No public taxes were levied and placed in a general fund, but the more simple expedient of having the persons present at any ceremony contribute on the spot produced the same result.

Another integrative aspect of the mourning ceremony involved the logistics of its planning; according to popular belief among Chumash peoples, a secret meeting of important chiefs and shamans was held several months before the ceremony in order to choose a date and location for it (Blackburn 1976:237).

To summarize these data, the *`antap* organization, the guild of undertakers, and their roles in mourning ceremonialism served to integrate Chumash communities over geographical space and through time by means of the periodic mourning ceremony. While day-to-day life was primarily experienced within one’s own village community, the commemoration of the deceased brought together people from far and wide. These activities emphasized the relationships among living communities, as well as the one between the community of the living and that of the dead.

Chumash Eschatological Concepts and Social Memory

The presence of recognized burial areas with systematic treatment of the dead has been documented among Early period sites in the Santa Barbara Channel area, c. 7500–2600 B.P. (C. King 1990:28, 95). While variations in burial treatment exist in Early period cemeteries (C. King 1990:95), this evidence suggests a well-established mortuary program, presumably integrated with incipient eschatological concepts that were greatly elaborated by the Late/Historic period (see Blackburn

1975:32–33; Hudson and Blackburn 1978:246). It is impossible at present to determine the antiquity of the various eschatological ideas that have been documented in Chumash cosmologies during the past 250 years, but the presence of distinct cemeteries and burial treatments argues that notions of an afterlife, in some form, date at least to the Early period (see Hollimon 2000).

The Land of the Dead, called *Šimilaqša* in Ventureño and *Nimalaqopok* in Cruzeño (Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:218), was one of the constituents of the Upper World in the cosmos of Chumash peoples. The Chumash peoples lived in the Middle World, while after death, souls traveled west across the ocean, toward the Land of the Dead (Blackburn 1975:33; King 1969:47). It was important for the soul to make the journey, because the unfocused supernatural power of the dead (soul) was inimical to the living (Blackburn 1975:32–34; see also Applegate 1974; Bean 1976; Walker and Hudson 1993).

The belief that the soul left the body a few days after death, and then visited familiar places before departing for the Land of the Dead, may explain the rather close proximity of cemeteries to Chumash villages. Several ethnohistoric observations of Chumash cemeteries, as well as archaeological information, demonstrate that burial areas were near villages, not situated at a great distance from the living population (King 1982:64). If the presence of spirits of the deceased were inimical or polluting, one would expect the cemetery to be at some distance from the village; if it were believed that only evil souls traveled among the living, then the proximity of the cemetery would not routinely threaten people. However, the inimical quality of the soul should not be minimized. Librado indicated that among the Ventureño, the soul needed to be fed for the five days before it traveled west; mourners would prepare food early in the day, gathering at the grave around 4 P.M. to scatter the food (Blackburn 1975:97).

Unlike the family tombs utilized during the New Kingdom in Egypt (Meskell this volume), the Ngaju bone repositories (Schiller this volume), or the Levantine Neolithic skull caches (Kuijt this volume), memorialization among Chumash peoples appears to have been a phenomenon primarily restricted to village shrines, sites that were physically and perhaps psychologically separate from the grave in a cemetery, the final resting place of the physical body, but not the soul (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1999). Although it appears that grave poles were marked so that family members might be able to identify and visit a grave (Hudson and Blackburn 1986:78), it seems that larger scale “worship” or commemoration of socially important figures (chiefs, *ʔantap* officials, guild members, etc.) was lacking.

According to available ethnographic information, Chumash peoples did not sequentially commemorate their dead. Mourning a dead person appears to have been limited to the burial and the periodic mourning ceremony, and even prominent individuals, such as chiefs, would not be commemorated year after year, but merely on the aforementioned occasions (see King 1969:52).

Perhaps this lack of sequential commemoration is tied to the belief among some Chumash groups that to speak the name of a dead person was a form of swearing (see Applegate 1974; Hudson 1979:49), because of fear that the deceased would be called back from its journey to the Land of the Dead. It is rather difficult to commemorate someone who cannot be named, unless a metaphorical or pseudonymous title is employed; while direct ethnographic evidence to support this interpretation is lacking, ethnohistoric sources indicate that reminders of the deceased should be destroyed, so as not to have the dead person recalled (Heizer 1955:157).

Mourning for the dead also appears to have been more of a community event, observed at the periodic mourning ceremony, than a matter observed and commemorated on an individual basis. For example, among the Ventureño,

The men who made the [funeral] banners were not those who had lost relatives during the year; they were simply the ones who made the banners. They made them for the dead who had died during the year and in remote ages, for themselves who were to die, and for others who were not yet born and who were to die. (Hudson et al. 1981:48)

While individual bereavement and grief are undeniable human emotions, it is possible that the cultural construction and organization of these emotions were primarily expressed in group form among Chumash peoples.

The lack of monumental architecture, the absence of sequential memorialization, and the inability to speak the name of the dead suggest that social memory among Chumash groups was manifested in a single ceremonial outlet. This “emotional sendoff” for the deceased helped to ensure that souls would successfully travel from the realm of the living to that of the dead, and would not be called to return from the afterlife.

Gendered Symbolism in Chumash Cosmology: Life and Death, Earth and Sun, Female and Male

Another aspect of beliefs that appears to have been widespread among Chumash groups is the gendered sym-

bolism of eschatological concepts. A primary symbolic pivot found in Chumash cosmologies appears to have been that between the deities Sun (*Kakunupmawa*) and Earth (*Hutash*). Sun was considered a male god, while Earth was a female entity, “the Indian’s mother and god,” who was worshipped for her fertility and provision of foods for humans and animals (Hudson et al. 1981:37); Chumash public rituals revolved around the esoteric and metaphorical worship of earth and sun deities (Blackburn 1976:235).

Although Sun was deified for his vivifying ability of providing light and warmth (Hudson et al. 1981:37), he was also fundamentally associated with death. The symbolic associations among the direction west, the setting sun, and death pervade Chumash eschatological concepts at the regional level (see Blackburn 1975:98; Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:218; Hudson et al. 1981:37). In the Ventureño language, the east-west journey of the sun was referred to as *‘ulop ka wotoko*, “equator of light” (Hudson et al. 1981:37), and souls were called *huiyalinane alkulul*, or “those that travel to the west” (Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:219); indeed, the phrase “to go west” is a generalized Chumash euphemism for death (Applegate 1974:111). In addition, feathers placed on a “sun pole” pointed to the east and west, symbolizing the progression of the sun across the sky (Hudson et al. 1981:62–63; see below).

While it is impossible to determine precisely the precontact beliefs of Chumash peoples with regard to death, many researchers have concluded that notions of reincarnation or resurrection reported by consultants were heavily influenced by Christian concepts encountered during the Mission period (e.g., Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:230; Hudson et al. 1981:4). It could be argued, therefore, that the apparent connotation of Sun as a vivifying entity was tied to his role as the agent of reincarnation, at least among the Ventureño (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:219; Hudson et al. 1981:37). If this interpretation is warranted, then perhaps a more accurate depiction of Sun is as strictly a death symbol, providing a symbolic opposition of sun/death/male:earth/life/female; this complementarity is seen in the metaphorical statement that “*Hutash* (Earth) is the mirror of the Sun, and the Sun is the mirror of *Hutash*” (see Hudson et al. 1981:53).

This complementary relationship is exemplified in the symbolism of the winter solstice ceremony, known as the Sun Festival, the most important event of the ritual calendar (Hudson et al. 1981:55–63). One of the primary goals of this ceremony was to “pull” the sun back on its northward course, ensuring the light and warmth neces-

sary for the growth of biotic life (Hudson et al. 1981:5, 61). This was accomplished by means of erecting a “sunstick,” a pole and stone whose central axis “was in the center of the earth, *Hutash*” (Hudson et al. 1981:57), representing the *axis mundalis* that connects the earth and the sun, or the earthly realm with the heavens; poles were used in many Chumash ritual contexts, especially those that symbolically connected the earth to the sun, or this world to the next (Hudson et al. 1981:5; see also Blackburn 1975:33; see below).

These sun poles could be made to represent a specific village community, and/or prominent members of those rancherías. Among the Ventureño,

Each pole was in honor of the captain [*wot*] of some ranchería, but sometimes they were to honor some prominent man of the ranchería who was not a captain, but who had done great good to the people of his village. Such a man was called *tsaqmaqshuy*, meaning “correspondence.” (Hudson et al. 1981:56)

These poles served as symbols of chiefly authority or other forms of social prominence; that they were erected at the winter solstice ritual, which drew attendees from throughout the region, highlights their function as concrete examples of social and ceremonial integration (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:223 for a discussion of poles used at shrines in the Chumash area).

Support for the interpretation of Sun as primarily a death symbol comes from a variety of ethnographic and archaeological sources. The use of “sun poles” (*spon kakunupmawa*) at shrines for the dead, which were often placed near solar observatories, appears to have been pervasive among Chumash peoples throughout the region (Hudson et al. 1977:62; Hudson and Blackburn 1978, 1986:82; Hudson and Underhay 1978:71; see also Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:232, n. 11, 13). In the periodic mourning ceremony (*shihuch*) among the Ventureño, a pole called “the pillar of the sun” was erected in the pit where the ritual fire had burned (Hudson et al. 1981:48). At this event, mourners washed their faces with “the tears of the Sun” (Hudson et al. 1981:49), which was also a ritual/medicinal substance used in nonmortuary contexts (Hudson et al. 1981:65), perhaps reflecting Sun’s restorative or life-renewing power in Ventureño belief.

Other components of the winter solstice ceremony highlight the symbolic importance of pairing (or opposing) life with death, Earth with Sun, and female with male in this cosmology. On “the night of *Kakunupmawa* [Sun],” observed on December 24 during the post-Mission period, men and women “were promiscuous,” to honor the sun (Hudson et al. 1981:60). A man could have

intercourse with any woman, married or not, by simply singing to her, and she was obliged to “render herself to him” by going off into the brush; a woman could do the same by singing to a man (Hudson et al. 1981:60). “This was the night that they thought of the living and the dead,” and the ability to have sexual relations without spousal jealousy or punitive action ceased at daybreak on the twenty-fifth (Hudson et al. 1981:60).

Similarly, the Dance of the Widows during the Sun Festival incorporated both life and death symbolism. According to Librado, the dance commenced after dark, and after midnight, a song was sung with the widows and orphaned girls weeping (Hudson et al. 1981:60–61). The songs performed at this dance were called *sapiyut*, or “renewal”; this highlights the symbolic association of the sun with death and possibly the influence of Christian concepts of resurrection in Ventureño Chumash belief (see Blackburn 1975:98; Haley and Wilcoxon 1999:219; Hudson et al. 1981:61).

The Dance of the Widows apparently followed ritual rules about segregation by gender. The ethnographic description of this ceremony states that a ring around the fire was formed by widowed women and orphaned girls, with an outside ring of men. While the old men sang and played deerhoof rattles, the women and girls would move only their hands. This division was reversed after midnight, when the women sang and the men danced (Hudson et al. 1981:61). Perhaps this association between gender and death rituals is another facet of the importance of these organizing principles in Chumash belief systems. As the *ʼaqi* mediated between the Middle World of the Chumash peoples and the afterlife in the Land of the Dead, so too they mediated between male and female genders (see Hollimon 1997, 2000).

This examination of gendered cosmological symbols suggests that these ideas were fundamental principles among many Chumash groups. Despite some variations in beliefs about death and the afterlife (see Haley and Wilcoxon 1999), the gender associations of eschatological concepts appear to be wide ranging. Perhaps these associations are a reflection of the essential gender dynamics in Chumash societies, manifested in beliefs about the supernatural power of birth and death that ultimately integrated all Chumash groups.

Archaeological Implications of Chumash Mortuary Rituals

The information discussed above has several implications for the interpretation of the archaeological record. Specifically, the examination of mortuary data for in-

sight about the timing and nature of emerging organizational complexity, the existence of hereditary inequality, and the mapping of social identity in burial contexts are of importance in current anthropological debates. While the ethnographic and ethnohistoric records hold valuable information concerning these issues, a simple and direct correspondence between these sources and the archaeological record is not forthcoming. Instead, ethnographic and ethnohistoric information provide hypotheses that may be tested with archaeological data, an approach that is particularly important and appropriate for contact period contexts (see Lightfoot 1995:204–5).

Of particular concern to this examination of Chumash peoples is the apparent discrepancy in burial treatment between average persons and those of specific status (political, economic, or ritual). While some written sources indicate that the deceased’s belongings were burned rather than buried with the body, archaeological data suggest that certain social identities were reflected in burial accompaniments. Understanding the circumstances that governed which identities would be reflected in mortuary contexts (and which would not) is a task for future archaeological research.

Preliminary examinations suggest that wealth and political power went hand in hand, and that “class consciousness” extended from the community of the living to that of the dead. Those whose identities were recognized on the basis of wealth and power, such as chiefs, canoemakers, and shamans, would be memorialized in the grave as well as in ceremonial activities. Persons who lacked social or economic weight would be commemorated primarily in the periodic mourning ceremony and would not have many grave goods reflecting personal status.

An example of this principle can be found in the lack of correspondence between biological sex and reconstructed gender roles in Santa Barbara Channel area burials (see Hollimon 1990). There is generally a poor fit between the biological sex of a burial and the “gender” of an artifact, which was based on its use in ethnographically documented activities; projectile points and fishhooks, used in male-dominated subsistence activities, were found as often in female burials as in male ones, while groundstone and basketry fragments, associated with female tasks, were found frequently in male graves. An explanation for this seeming incongruity can be found in the ethnographic and ethnohistoric records; the deceased’s property was burned, and burial accompaniments were belongings of the dead person’s loved ones, not the property of the deceased. To reiterate, the process of memorialization for the average Chumash per-

son took place in the periodic mourning ceremony, rather than other venues.

Nevertheless, many social, political, and economic roles appear to have been marked in mortuary contexts (see Gamble et al. In press; Hollimon 1990; C. King 1990; L. King 1982; Martz 1984). For example, members of the plank canoe guild and the makers of beads and bead drilling tools were apparently designated in burial contexts; it could be inferred that other occupational specialists, such as the *`aqi*, would be similarly marked. Tentative identification of third-gender undertakers has been made in some Santa Barbara Channel area archaeological sites. This relied on the presence of material culture markers in the form of undertaking tools (digging stick weights and basketry impressions) in the graves of several biological males from Santa Cruz Island; one of these skeletons displayed pronounced spinal arthritis characteristic of females from this population, perhaps indicating that this person incurred activity-induced pathology resulting from the repeated use of a digging stick (Hollimon 1996).

The ways in which these specific identities were marked, and how these practices varied over geographical space and through time, must be examined by archaeologists if we are to more fully understand the evolving complexity of ancestral Chumash groups. The integrative nature of many mortuary activities among Chumash groups is also an important factor that should be considered by anthropologists. The interplay of ethnicity, individual social identity, gender, eschatological concepts, and cosmological principles provides researchers with many interpretive sources for their data.

The nature of political, economic, and social interaction among Chumash groups is of considerable importance in the debates concerning emerging organizational complexity in this area. A major focus of these forms of interaction was mourning ceremonialism; the mortuary behaviors of Chumash groups reinforced personal, occupational, political, ethnic, and ritual identities, and integrated distinct village communities into a larger whole. This examination provides a background in which discussions about the emergence of chiefdom-level organization may be expanded and illuminated.

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Matters of Life and Death: Mortuary Rituals as Part of a Larger Whole among the Betsileo of Madagascar

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Faly tokoa izahay, amin'izao ataonareo izao.

We are made *very happy* by what you are doing at this moment.

Tsy ny maty no mahafaly anay,

It is not *death* that causes us to rejoice,

fa ny fitsangananareo izao mitondra ny teny fampihononana

But it is [rather] your “standing” [presence] there [in front of us] bringing words to ease our pain

It is customary among the Betsileo, as among other highland populations in Madagascar, to formally and verbally “present condolences,” *nenenampaty* (DuBois 1938:652) to those suffering the loss of a family member.¹ In the rural countryside, the spokesperson (some combination of senior, responsible, articulate, and most often male individual) of a delegation sent to participate in funerary rituals presents these condolences upon the delegation’s arrival. While the formulaic speech of the person presenting the condolences is filled with words acknowledging the grief and sadness of the loss,² the response on the part of the family receiving the condolence finishes with an expression of joy at the presence of family and friends at such moments of death of the form that opens this chapter.³

Such words and sentiments bring to our attention the importance of an observation made by such anthropologists as Crick (1982) and Fernandez (1986) that the societies anthropologists study are “cosmological” in their perspectives. They are ultimately interested in the “whole” (Fernandez 1986:188–91) and to this end their intellectual and artistic efforts are directed toward discovering, exploring, and celebrating totalities. This is a whole of which the pieces do not exist in simple pairs of binary oppositions; a whole

in which even life and death are inevitably and intricately intertwined. Humphreys (1981:9) in the introduction to his co-edited work *Mortality and Immortality: The Anthropology and Archaeology of Death* has made a related point:

It is an obvious ethnocentric mistake to assume that the behaviour evoked by death is to be seen solely as a reaction to the disruptions of social and emotional equilibrium caused by a particular deceased. Death provides occasions and materials for a symbolic discourse on life.

Madagascar and the Betsileo

We will examine issues of the intertwining of “matters of life and death” and the discourse on life that ensues in the face of death by focusing on the Betsileo of the highland interior of Madagascar. The Betsileo are rice-growing and cattle-herding peasants numbering over a million whose traditional lands surround the regional center of Fianarantsoa (Figure 5.1). This chapter is based on our reflections upon the rituals and the philosophies of death of the Betsileo we have known. It draws upon several field seasons of work,⁴ some of which were unfortunately and disturbingly too close to the deaths of friends and acquaintances.

While the rainforests and the lemurs of Madagascar might be known to many off-islanders, the Malagasy cultures remain “exotic.” What conventional knowledge of Malagasy customs and beliefs is held by the off-islander is often referent to the Merina population that inhabit the region around the capital of Antananarivo (Figure 5.1). For instance, many people know from writings (e.g., Bloch 1971) and film that the Merina population engage in secondary burial rituals of “rewrapping” the dead. Yet, the Merina are only one of the eighteen or so ethnic groups on the island. At least one important Malagasy source argues that this practice is exclusive to the Merina (Firaketana 1945:147). The Betsileo we are discussing, it should be noted, do not engage in secondary burials (cf. Kottak 1980).⁵

The Betsileo, like all people, must confront death’s defiance of life and social structure, and they do so within the dimensions of the cosmological as well as the quotidian. On the one hand, this contribution seeks to appreciate the more formal philosophical assertions (read “world view”) of material symbols and of ritual words and deeds in Betsileo mortuary practices. On the other hand, it also seeks to appreciate the roles informal exchanges of words, the accomplishment of immediate tasks, and other forms of social “encounters” serve during funerals in the reaffirmation of life and community relations. Joyce (this volume) has also remarked that burials are social occasions in all their experiential aspects. Further, this chapter seeks to appreciate the “tone” or “style” of the discourse on and the practice of life that pervades the proceedings both formal and informal.

There are certain large themes of philosophy and mortuary practice that are held in common among the groups of the interior highlands and even groups across the island. One central theme shared among the highland populations⁶ involves a point mentioned earlier, that life and death are inextricably intertwined. Nevertheless, the Malagasy say: “Life is sweet; so better to die tomorrow than today!” (*Mamy ny aina; aleho maty rahampitso toy izay maty anio!*). Consequently, though death is inevitable, one should pay close attention to the intertwining of life and death. Life is to be fostered to promote the health and well-being of the living, and death, despite its inevitability, is to be contained, constrained to its proper domain. Highland populations consequently are careful about inappropriate, as well as inadvertent, “mixing” of these domains and are careful when life and death are brought into close interface as at the moments of individual deaths. Yet, despite the similarity of themes

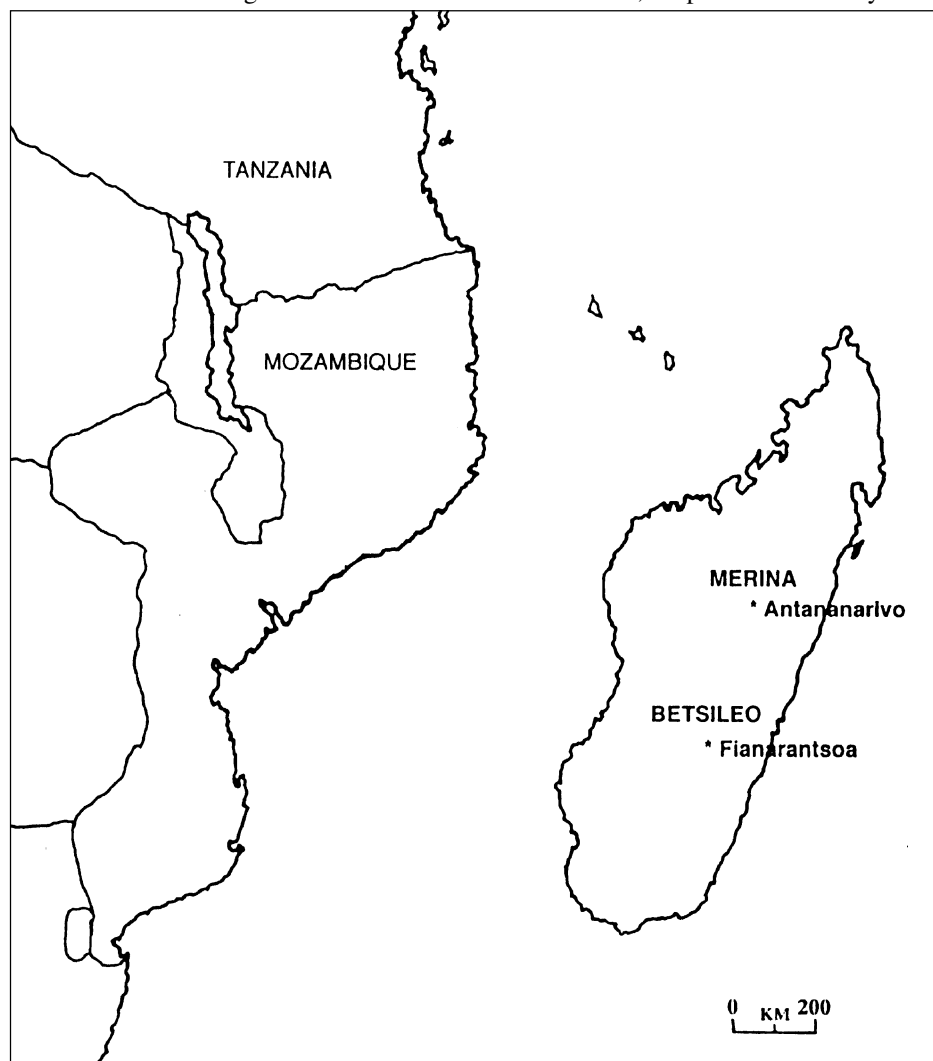


Figure 5.1. Madagascar and the east coast of Africa.

across groups on the island, these themes as warp are woven into variable tapestries by the weft of local practice and belief. We would assert further that to appreciate these “tapestries” the concept of “ethos” must be appropriately invoked as complement to world view, a point that anthropologists such as Bateson (1958) and Geertz (1973:126–41) have addressed.⁷

Formal Affairs

The fact that in Madagascar (as in numerous other cultures) the ancestors are critical to the continued health and well-being of their living descendants does not allow for any straightforward quarantining of death and the dead, nor does it allow for the development of any simple logical schema of strict opposition between the domains of life and death. So it is vigilance in word and deed that is necessary to keep death within its proper domain. Most (if not all) adult Betsileo know the grand outlines of how to restrain death to its proper domain in their actions. (Precautions range from cleansing oneself in running water after attending a funeral to not carrying meat home from a funeral meal.) However, these grand outlines are more fully developed and put into ritual practice by specialists (*mpanandro*) who know how to negotiate and nuance the complexities that temporal rhythms, landscapes, gestures, words, and even off-island practices and beliefs bring to the affairs of the living and the domain of the dead. It is these ritual specialists who are consulted in the orientation of new houses and tombs and are consulted in the details of ritual affairs.

Within the symbolic framework that organizes the gestures, words, and directives of ritual specialists one can appreciate the “definition” of the proper domains of life and death. Tomb foundations are below ground; house foundations are above ground. The foundations of tombs are ritually initiated by an individual designated by the ritual specialist, an individual who is an only child, while house foundations are initiated by a designated individual both of whose parents are still living. An old, worn spade is used to dig a tomb foundation and in a ritual gesture of discarding, it is flung aside when the task is done. A brand new spade is used for the foundation of a house. Tombs, the “places of the dead” (*toerany ny maty*), are traditionally made of stone and more recently of cement; the houses of the living are made of wood and brick. Tombs are placed outside villages, though the demarcation of “outside” might simply be a road, a pathway, or a small stream. Entrances to cattle parks (cattle parks are considered indicators of family wealth) and the *tanjom-belona* or life-orienting points of

houses that lie to the north of their central beams are never aligned to include tombs within their line of sight; tombs are oriented slightly off the axes of the cardinal directions (for fuller discussion see Kus and Raharijaona 1990).

“In life one house; in death one tomb” (*Velona iray trano; maty iray fasana*) is an often cited proverb that speaks of the strength as well as comfort of the extended family in life as well as in death. This “closeness” makes the demarcation of the domains of houses and tombs, and the domains of the living and the dead, a necessary but delicate and challenging task. In the house, ideally, individuals sleep on beds placed against walls with their heads to the north or the east, for these are the directions of nobility and sanctity. Lying in state in the house, corpses are placed on beds whose feet are made from pieces of banana tree trunks and their heads are oriented to the south. The beds of the dead as they lie in state in the house are deliberately pulled away from the wall. The newly dead are in the process of withdrawing from the ranks of the living as they move into the ranks of the ancestors, and so their temporary “rest” in the house needs to be effectively demarcated from the sleeping bodies of the still living. When a body is taken into the tomb, it is put in feet first; children come out of the womb head first. If a body needs to be transferred between tombs, it is removed feet first from the original tomb.

Tombs and funerals must also be appropriately “oriented” in temporal flows. While the construction of the house foundations is begun and completed before noon, tomb foundations and funerals only begin when the sun is in decline. While one cannot choose one’s day of death, funerals do not take place on Tuesday for this is *Talata gorobaka* or “wide-open Tuesday” nor do they take place on Thursday for this is *Alakamisy* and the term *mis*y implies “abundance.” Both of these names evoke plays on words making allusion to an “open call” to increase the ranks of the dead.

The number six is associated with the house in numerous ways such as the six stakes that are laid out to mark the location of its foundation and in the six shovelfuls of dirt that ritually initiate the digging of the foundation. The Malagasy say: “*eni-noro, enin-kahavelomana*.” The play on words here is that “six” or *enina* also means to “envelop” or “surround [protectively].” The sequence of 666 carries the image of fullness and protection as well as extension and growth, consequently a corresponding sum of “money” is said to be an appropriate offering to a ritual specialist when the ceiling that covers the ground floor (*rihana*) of the house is laid down, which will cover and protect the family that will eventually live there.⁸ The number seven, on the other hand, is associated with de-

limitation of negative forces. Using the force of rhyme, Malagasy say: “*Mamito azy ny fito*,” “seven breaks/cuts off all that is bad.” Seven strikes of the earth with a spade initiate tomb construction and seven stones mark the entrance to a tomb that is being built or to a tomb that has been temporarily opened to admit a new body. As the wife or husband of a deceased individual walks away from the tomb where the body has been laid, s/he will toss seven pebbles at the entrance and continue to walk without looking back.

As asserted earlier, simple oppositions do not effectively construct a whole whose core contains elements that are complementary as well as contrasting. When we look at these practices and pronouncements of ritual specialists we see how additional pieces of the whole are aligned with its central entanglement of life and death; and so numbers (six and seven), and directions (up and down, inside and outside, north and off-north, rising suns and setting suns), and objects (stone, brick, used and new spades, local topography), and people (only sons and children whose parents are still living, men and women) find their ordering in the whole. As Fernandez (1968) suggests, the alignment is accomplished sometimes in subtle and unexpected ways, in the rhyming of words, the rhythms of celestial phenomena, or the reminiscence of experience (the feel of an old spade in one’s hand, the pull of gravity, of fatigue, of weight in the downward direction). The talent of the ritual specialists is to use metaphor as strategy, as “predication upon an inchoate situation” (to paraphrase Fernandez 1986:28–63). A metonymic elaboration of the parts is used to constitute the metaphor of the whole and this talent is recognized by other members of society.

The formal rules of behavior and speech on the part of a Betsileo community in funerary rites resonate with the practices of their ritual specialists. Such behavior and speech are further intertwined with the social dimensions of family and community (*fikambanana*), gender, and age, reinforcing and highlighting those organizational principles of Betsileo society. The immediate family and community affected by a death are quickly organized along age and gender lines to carry out the critical tasks of announcing the death, preparing to receive guests for the funeral services, and staging the funeral proper. Senior males organize the activities that involve male labor. Some of the *lehilahy mahery*, literally the “strong males,” are sent out as *hiraka* to inform distant family of the death. Their itinerary and their destinations are coordinated by the elder males. Other of these *lehilahy mahery* are sent to open and check the tomb that will receive the body. They are to make sure the tomb is in fit condition

(not deteriorated, not damp) to receive the newly deceased. Some of their ranks will later be responsible for the closing of the tomb. Others are sent to bring back firewood necessary for food preparation for the expected guests and still others are sent to catch and bind the cattle that will be sacrificed to feed the guests. The cattle slaughtered for both festive and funerary occasions are killed by males of noble status. Cattle are slaughtered in the cattle park for happy celebrations and their blood is collected. Some of this blood is used for blessing and the rest is cooked and shared among all participating in the celebration. The cattle for funerals are most often dispatched in a field and their blood spilt there.⁹ Other *lehilahy mahery*, who are articulate in speech, are designated to act as *mpitataka* or *mpinenena*.¹⁰ Coached by elders on what to say and leaning on staffs to signify their still youthful dependence on elders, they are responsible for the repeated telling of the details surrounding the death of the recently deceased for the guests as they arrive throughout the day. These details include not only the immediate causal circumstances of death but also details of how the individual was treated or helped, the number of burial shrouds that have been offered by the family, and other details that are considered critical to the story of the circumstances leading up to the death of the individual and her/his preparation for burial. This information will be carried back to the villages by guests in attendance who are most often acting as representatives of a larger group of individuals not in attendance. It is the responsibility of such designated representatives to report faithfully the details of their participation in the rites as well as the information offered them. The elder males, besides directing the activity of junior males, are responsible for receiving the guests, including receiving their condolences with proper words of recognition, such as the words that opened this chapter. They are responsible for the formal speech making during funeral rites at the tomb that invokes the ancestors, recounts the history of the deceased individual and her/his group, and offers formal thanks to the guests in attendance. They are also responsible for the proper execution of details of the opening of the tomb, the introduction of the body into the tomb, and the closing of the tomb (though the physical labor of closing the tomb is done by the junior males). In the male division of labor a Malagasy proverb points to the general lines of this division: “It is the elder who speaks, the junior carries the baggage” (*Mananjandry afakolan-entana; manan-joky afakolan-teny*).¹¹

When asked what women do daily, the Betsileo reply that they carry water from the spring and they cook food. When asked what women do during marriage cer-

emonies, during celebrations (*lañonana*), during the construction of houses, or during funeral services, they say that they carry water from the spring and they cook food. The women provide the backdrop to the sustenance of life for men's punctuations of routine in speech and action. That sustenance is considered anything but trivial by the Betsileo for it maintains the social order despite the ruptures of routine, including the threatening tear a death brings to the social fabric. And so during funerary rites the elder women direct their juniors, the *ampela mahery* or the "strong females," in the preparation of the food and in the serving of the food to the guests. The older women also take turns sitting in attendance with the body of the deceased and crying to mourn the loss.

The guests who arrive to formally offer their condolences bring with them offerings of money and rice, offerings that are called *ranomaso latsaka* ("fallen tears") and *kofehy momba ny taolana* ("thread to wrap the bones [of the dead]"). These words are not like the euphemisms Westerners employ to keep death at a "comfortable" distance (e.g., we are sorry for your "loss"), they are rather the words of strong metaphors that acknowledge the pain and sadness of the family. The reader is asked to remember, however, that these offerings of condolences are acknowledged with words alluding to the "joy" that these guests bring with these gestures.

The meal that all partake of carries with it the cross-culturally well-known theme of social solidarity/relations and the sharing of food. During festive occasions the sharing of food is generous and cooked meat is served at the main meal. There are symbolically elaborate formulas for the distribution of meat between genders and among family and community and ancestors during festive occasions. For instance, the four feet will go to the villages in four cardinal directions where the cattle may have trampled crops and the hump will go to senior and noble members of the group (in earlier historic times it went to the sovereign). Representative pieces of what are considered the six principle parts of a cow's body, as well as the skin and the horns, will be suspended in the northeast corner of the central house sponsoring the ceremony. This display is to represent to the ancestors that an entire cow or bull has been sacrificed. Some of this meat will also be carried back by the guests to be cooked in their villages for family members who could not attend. In the case of a funeral, only a few pieces of the slaughtered animal are designated for certain individuals. While the individuals and pieces may vary from local area to local area, in the regional details one can nevertheless see the symbolism of the distribution of such

meat reinforcing the demarcation of cattle sacrificed for joyous occasions from cattle sacrificed in funerary rites. For instance, the individuals immediately involved in the slaughter of the animal are given pieces of meat. The esophagus is given to the individual (*mpanominda*) who has slit the throat of the sacrificed cow. The *henan'angozy*, or morsels of meat that still cling to the skin of the slaughtered animal are given to the males who assist in the sacrifice since they may recover these morsels after the main portion of the meat is sent to the women for cooking. Some small pieces of meat are given to the young boy(s) who may run little errands during the slaughter.¹² The *ampela mahery*, or junior women, who are involved in food preparation are given the stomach (*taimonron-kena*) and the rumen (*boribori-kena*), perhaps signifying their role in preparing food for consumption. The *lehilahy mahery*, or junior males, are given a "little bit of every kind of meat," it was explained to us, because they are responsible for traveling "across both hills and valleys" to announce the death and funeral. Most of the meat from the slaughtered cow, however, will end up in a stew to be shared by participants at the funeral. This cooked meat that is shared is called *hena ratsy* or "bad meat," to symbolize the sad nature of the event that occasioned this meal. It is a bland meal with meat that is not flavored with salt. Oftentimes high-status individuals and ritual specialists, who work "for life" (*fahavelomana*), will not partake of this fare. None of this meat is carried away from the funeral, for death must be limited to its proper domain.

The guests will participate, as will members of the hosting community, with the exception of young children and young and/or pregnant females, in the service of burial that takes place at the tomb. On the designated day the funeral cortege will leave when the sun is in its decline; the body, carried by able-bodied males, leads the group followed by the women and then the men. Around the tomb the members of the close family will be seated near the entrance. Of the rest of the group, the males will sit as a group to the right of the entrance and the women as a group to the left. If the deceased was a female the body will be placed to the left side of the tomb and the final laying out of the corpse will be handled by senior women. A male will be placed to the right and attended to by males.

There is a symbolic efficacy to a system of local knowledge continuously recreated and put into ritual practice by local experts who know how to syncretically align the pieces of a whole in which life and death are central components. There is also an efficacy of copious

and repetitive acts and words of ritual formality on the part of ordinary practitioners as they are aligned socially according to gender, age, kinship, and community, in handling the challenge that death brings to their ranks and to their individual lives. In studying the formal ritual of expert and nonexpert an outsider to the Betsileo can come to appreciate the potent poetry and philosophy of Betsileo practice in restraining death in its proper domain.

Informal Affairs

There is also a force of conviction to a world view anchored in the immediacy of the “informal” domain of sensuous human experience such as in informal exchanges of language and exchanges of helping hands in carrying out tasks in preparation for funeral rites. It is perhaps in that domain that one can best appreciate the link Bateson (1958) and Geertz (1973) have suggested exists between world view and ethos.

The emotional background is causally active within a culture, and no functional study can ever be reasonably complete unless it links up the structure and pragmatic working of the culture with its emotional tone or ethos. (Bateson 1958:2)

In fact, we are brought to an appreciation of this remark via our own initial outsiders’ observations over several field seasons of what appeared to us as a fascinating blend of reverence and irreverence in Betsileo practice.

The Betsileo have a reputation for being traditionalists, and among all populations of the island tradition is often involved with *fady* or taboo, proscriptions on behavior. Such taboos can be applied to an individual or to a group, or they can be circumstantial. For instance, some individuals are tabooed from eating eggs, or garlic, or meat from funerals. Such *fady* may have been imposed by a traditional healer or, in the case of a ritual specialist, revealed in a dream. Some noble groups are not allowed to eat pork or to raise pork. Actions that break routine such as the building of a new house or a funeral are *circumstances* that are subject to a number of taboos. As mentioned above, it is taboo to carry meat from a funeral to one’s home, *unless* one is a foreigner, or so we came to learn once upon a new field season.

We were very new to a particular area of Betsileo terrain where we wanted to do ethnographic fieldwork so we were automatically placed in the category of *vazaha* or “foreigner.” Within a week of our arrival there was a death in the village and following our felt obligation we participated in the funeral services. As anthro-

pologists (and as it is the case that one of us is also Malagasy), we were aware of the *fady* on taking meat from a funeral, a common *fady* in other parts of the island. Our hosts were aware on their part that foreigners (including urban non-Betsileo Malagasy) have strange customs that they observe as well, some of which have to do with not always accepting offers of food from rural peasants. And so we were handed our share of the meat to take home to cook for ourselves. When asked about this breach in custom their reasoning was explained in terms of acknowledging, if not respecting, the customs of foreigners, including the fact that we had left a small child at home during our absence and needed to return to attend to her.

Indeed, we came to see numerous cases of the breaching of taboos by Betsileo themselves. In small deviances the Betsileo often acknowledge the grounds of “technicality.” Jokingly they speak of the proverb “*Aza fady, Rakelimalaza, fa ny atiny tsa mba kisoa*” (Excuse me, Sir Kelimalaza, but the liver is not [“technically” the flesh/meat of] the pig).¹³ Kelimalaza was an important palladium of the Merina state of Madagascar that controlled two-thirds of the island, including the Betsileo region, before French takeover at the end of the nineteenth century. This palladium or “fetish” was surrounded by numerous taboos, including a very strong prohibition against its association with pork or anyone who had eaten pork. This humorous proverb also contains the element of how one gets around more serious Betsileo taboos, and this has to do with formal apology (*aza fady*) and with asking to be pardoned from any potential offense that may result from one’s actions (*miala tsiny*). Words have power to excuse because in the formal request for excuse is the recognition of the existence and the importance of the taboo and customs. To be accused of ignoring custom, *tsy malala fomba*, is to be accused of willful disrespect or of ignorance. Both willful disrespect and ignorance are in turn accusations of doing dishonor to oneself, *very zo* or *tsy mahay manaja tena*. Through technicality and through formal apology, however, one can, nevertheless, leave a funeral before fully participating in all actions for its completion. By pronouncing the formula of asking pardon, acknowledging the social gravity of the custom, and then offering details of a “lived situation” that necessitates infraction of custom (e.g., to attend to important family affairs, to leave early to avoid traveling at night and risking encounters with brigands, etc.) one is permitted to violate custom and taboo. The *performative* power of words of excuse puts purported Betsileo traditionalism in a very interesting light, a pragmatic philosophy in some ways.¹⁴

The authors are accustomed to the dirge-like orchestration of Merina funerals in the region around the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo (Figure 5.1), with their respectful and muted tones, the somber faces, and the sober liturgy of Christianity. It is also the case that powerful and grave words to propitiate the ancestors and to thank the guests in attendance are spoken in the formal discourse of Betsileo funerals by senior males. However, both the co-authors of this chapter, one Merina and one off-islander, were originally startled and then continually amazed by the seeming irreverence of the Betsileo in funerary situations. The Betsileo are quite appreciative of good times and joking around (*bevazivazy*) normally. And, as one might expect, there are exchanges of stories and even humorous remarks among those individuals who, not immediate blood kin to the deceased, are involved over the several days of the funeral in the various tasks of carrying out the rites and providing for the guests in attendance. Yet Betsileo can go much further in their humorous jests. During mortuary vigils, those who fall asleep may find upon waking that the hat and cloak that they were wearing have been used to adorn the corpse, or that while sleeping a crucifix had been placed on their chest in imitation of a corpse. Betsileo humor sometimes even follows the deceased to the grave door, as rum is passed around “discreetly” and joking remarks are made under one’s breath. At one funeral we attended one of us (V. Raharijaona) sat among a group of males in close proximity to the tomb door and weeping female relatives of the deceased. There was a moment of long duration as the arrangement of the body was taking place inside the tomb. As if to fill a perceived void and silence, the men began passing around a bottle of rum and a glass, and making casual remarks. When the rum was passed to Raharijaona, he declined with the appropriate gesture of spilling a little rum in his hands and running this through his hair. Another male jokingly remarked in rhyme: “*Tsy miditra an-doha, fa asafo ny loha*” ([The rum] doesn’t enter your head, only caresses it). And another jokingly remarked that “*Matahotra ny vadiny [vazaha]*” (He is [probably] afraid of his wife [the foreigner]).

If one looks at earlier accounts, as late as the 1930s, one learns of the custom of *fiandravanana*. A Jesuit missionary to the Betsileo, Père DuBois, described the custom as follows:

Among the Betsileo, this word is better translated as “nights of orgy, partying, and drinking, where all the most elementary moral laws are ignored.” It is truly a fever of madness of the debauched that knows no limit.

A singular inversion, one remarks: that which should be a cause of [deep] sorrow, as the loss of a father or a mother, becomes an occasion of frantic amusement. How is this anomaly to be explained:

A violent reaction of life against the mystery and fear of death, an unhealthy release of a race whose poverty and servitude gives them little other means of amusement, the vanity of needing to attract as many people as possible to the funeral, lewd initiation of youth, power of an ancient custom, it is possible that all these factors find a place in this bizarre custom. (authors’ translation of DuBois 1938:662¹⁵)

Understandably DuBois and others of Christian persuasion (e.g., Rainihifina 1975) found the custom to be some combination of primitive at the level of psyche and/or society and depraved on the part of the deprived. Yet, if one explores the discussion of this formal custom by DuBois, the suggestion of Humphreys that we might be facing a “discourse on life” seems illuminating.

According to DuBois (1938:662–66 [all translations by the authors]) the *fiandravanana* proceeds as follows. The *ambiroa* (loosely translated as “soul”) of the deceased who is lying in state before burial is in a condition of liminality. The soul has left the society of the living and has not yet joined the society of the dead in the tomb. “Its [the *ambiroa*’s] condition is consequently that of a soul removed from all company, abandoned in solitude and silence” (DuBois 1938:662). The Betsileo say: “*Ny mate raha mangiqa*” (death is a thing of silence) (DuBois 1938:662). So through pity and affection the family members take it upon themselves to amuse the dead. As night falls the community comes together to carry out a “sacred duty” (*devoir sacré*) (DuBois 1938:663), which will often extend over three nights of a wake.

Assembled inside and outside the house, family, friends, and neighbors listen to the opening pronouncement of the head of the family: “Death is a thing of silence, everyone carry out their duty [to break this silence].” The discourse continues with numerous words of thanks to those in attendance for not having abandoned the family in this time of sorrow. Several times the image of death as “a thing of silence” is repeated.

The discourse continues. “Brought together in this sadness, I speak to my family [and friends]. This is what I have to say to you: Even if someone has taken your wife, if you have quarrelled at the spring, or near the rice mortar, if there is disagreement among you, leave all that aside, even if one has trampled your robe or pushed you. [Be polite and] ask permission when you leave and enter, if you need to spit

tobacco ask where you can do this rather than spitting on your neighbor's robe."

"You have come so as not to abandon us."

"Those who know how to sing, do so! Those who know how to dance, dance! Don't wait for one another [to begin]."

With this speech accomplished, someone says: "Raise up the joyous chants, you women," and the drumming and clapping and stamping begin. Shouting of "*amasaho! amasaho!*" which may be literally translated as "cook it up," but perhaps is rendered more faithfully by the American idiomatic phrase "Get it on!" continues.

The ambiance continues to heat up and at some point in the frenzy even the relatives and children of the deceased partake in the dancing, and the shouting continues. Rum is passed around at several intervals and people gorge themselves on meat. Sometimes in the distribution of the rum it is shared beginning with the youngest, rather than in traditional fashion from eldest on down. There are tale tellers who recount amusing, and sometimes lewd, stories about the deceased. The more audacious the remarks, the louder the clapping. More rum is distributed.

When everyone is loosened up, according to DuBois, "the moment of horrors arrives" (*le moment des horreurs est venu*). With the men close around the house, someone knocks at the window and says the fateful word: "A message!" "A directive!" (*Hafatra!*). Women and girls rise up in mass and cover their heads with their robes and they rush to the door, and someone among them yells, "Who is it?" The response is, "It's me." As the women leave the house, according to DuBois, they are pursued and caught by men outside. And married or not, close relative or not, "the mouth is brought close to the ear of another" (*tohotsofina*) to deliver the message. According to DuBois, a general "orgy" then ensues.

These scenes not only take place during several successive evenings, but sometimes they continue on into the day. There are, in addition, "entertainment specialists" (*mpanao taifototsa*) who conduct these affairs. There are song contests and dancing contests and all sorts of games and amusements to liven up the affair. Men engage in mock fights and some are pushed to such extremes that they cry out, "I am an animal" (*Biby aho*) or "I am drunk" (*mamo aho*). DuBois's remarks continue, saying that drunken men will pursue any woman in sight and that the women cannot refuse to participate or they expose themselves to all sorts of rumors.

DuBois summarizes his analysis of the affair as follows:

In short, extreme waste of resources, ruined health, illnesses of all kind, early lessons of immorality, this is what the *fiandravanana* appears to me. Here we have the explanation of the misery and the poverty of this race. (DuBois 1938:666¹⁶)

DuBois, a Jesuit priest whose sentiments of moral outrage concerning the *fiandravanana* are quite clear, published his writings in the 1930s. Working in the 1980s and the 1990s in the Betsileo region we never encountered incidents or remarks on the part of Betsileo women and men that corroborate DuBois's observations on the "forced" debauchery of women. Four key "informants" (two men and two women), when asked directly and independently about DuBois's assertion, each replied that any "carrying out" of the message (*hafatsa*¹⁷) was by mutual consent and that women of course had the right of refusal. One of these individuals went on to say that writing in the earlier part of the century, DuBois most likely received his information from his catechists who were probably trying to please him with both their stories and their appropriate sense of condemnation of such ancestral practices. With the continued influence of outsiders, including foreign missionaries such as DuBois and foreign administrators, there is no longer a "formal" and ritual inclusion of *fiandravanana* in Betsileo funerary rites. Indeed, one rural Betsileo said that it is not uncommon to see formal announcements on the part of urban dwellers in the regional capital of Fianarantsoa that state that mortuary services for a deceased relative will *not* include an all-night vigil. The rural Betsileo interpret this as a veiled statement that no "partyng" is to mar the solemn occasion.

In the contemporary Betsileo countryside the term *fiandravanana* is used to designate a vigil that can accompany either a joyful occasion (such as a *lañonana* of thanksgiving for a request answered by the ancestors) or a sorrowful occasion such as funeral. During the *fiandravanana* accompanying funerals, especially if the defunct was an elder who led a long and full life, it is still said that while living this elder had left a "message" or a *hafatsa* stating more or less directly that life should go on and that joy should accompany her/his parting, with an acknowledged reading between the lines that would not have pleased DuBois. The "spirit" or "ethos" of the traditional *fiandravanana* continues as spontaneous song contests take place during all-night vigils, as bawdy humor is a central theme of exchanges between the sexes, as evening encounters take place, as the tales of humor

and adventure continue to be told and retold at moments of the gatherings of family and community during funerals, and as humor still follows the deceased to the entrance of the tomb.

Discussion

Ucko nevertheless claimed that familiarity with ethnographic data was of the utmost value to the archaeologist or historian because it served to widen the horizons of the interpreter. (Humphreys 1981:4)

One Betsileo (and another Jesuit) scholar of Betsileo custom has more recently (1983) remarked on the *fiandravanana* in the following terms:

Obviously there has been much written about the *fiandravanana*, [most often] to point out its strangeness or to denounce it in the name of hygiene and morality. Not everything is false in these “appreciations” [of the custom]; but one also needs to pull out the symbolic coherence [of this practice] from [the context of] orgiastic excesses, as reactions of life against the threat of death. (authors’ translation of Razafintsalama 1983:200¹⁸)

But this brings us back to the quote of Humphreys from earlier in this chapter:

It is an obvious ethnocentric mistake to assume that the behaviour evoked by death is to be seen solely as a reaction to the disruptions of social and emotional equilibrium caused by a particular deceased. Death provides occasions and materials for a symbolic discourse on life. (Humphreys 1981:9)

We would argue that the “symbolic coherence” Razafintsalama is suggesting has coherence beyond an array of visceral and emotional reactions against the threat of death. It is a coherence that comes, in part, from the ethos (the “emotional tone”) of a respectful acknowledgment for tradition combined with a humorous engagement with life even to the point of seeming irreverence in the face of dramatic situations. This coherence also has to do with Humphreys’s suggestion that “death provides occasions and materials for a symbolic discourse on life,” and in the case of the Betsileo this notion of “discourse” carries a literal as well as figurative sense.

Betsileo mortuary practices are filled with discourse and language. There are formal speeches to express and receive condolences, formal speeches to recount the life and group history of the deceased, formal “prayers” to address the ancestors, and formal speeches to thank all participants in the funerary rites. There are also public recountings of the specific events that led up to the death of the deceased, information that must be carried back

by word of mouth by delegates of groups in attendance at the funeral to those members of the group who could not attend. But there is also the “unofficial” discourse of humorous stories, some licentious, told while funeral attendees carry out tasks or wait for official events to begin, and the “unofficial” joking commentary that takes place during formal speech making that would seem to serve as the counterpoint of life’s individualized sound to the muted tones and official phrasings of formal speech making in the face of death--the point and counterpoint of respect for tradition and love of humor.

For the Betsileo speech signifies human life and social life. One proverb, “*manapa-taroña, manapaka aina*” (Michel-Andrianarahinjaka 1987:81) literally means “to cut/interrupt the speech [of another is to] cut/take away [her/his] life.”¹⁹ Indeed, among the Betsileo when an individual is thought to have given up her/his last breath, the first gesture among those present is to shake the dead person while calling her/his name: “It is in the silence that echoes this call that the Betsileo recognize the death [of that individual]” (loose translation of Michel-Andrianarahinjaka 1987:82²⁰). Michel-Andrianarahinjaka (1987:80) argues that the Betsileo do not have a proper term (noun) for “silence”; they more often use terms that are negations of speech or noise. He goes on to clarify the term *mangia* that we have seen used in the phase above, *ny mate raha mangia*. In the Malagasy dialect of Imerina, the term *mangina* is translated as “to be silent, to keep quiet, or stay silent.” The corresponding Betsileo term, *mangia*, Michel-Andrianarahinjaka (1987:80) argues, has a different central significance, which is “[to find oneself in a state of] solitude, isolation, deprived of company.” So, the translation of *ny mate raha mangia* is rendered more correctly as “death is a thing of solitude” rather than DuBois’s (1938:662) translation as “death is a thing of silence.” It would seem then that it is by extension of the concept of solitude into the recognition of speech as life that images of silence are consequently evoked in this Betsileo phrase.

Speech, for the Betsileo, needs to be appreciated as a *performative gesture* of the living. But during the *fiandravanana* there are also moments when “speech” gives way to singing and shouting as part of the sound/noise that is to keep the dead company before the body is placed in the tomb. Yet, there is also the “whisper,” the “putting of the mouth close to the ear” (*tohotsofina*) to deliver the “message” (*hafatsa*); it is a whisper whose significance and force may come from a contrasting allusion to other forms of social speech. The term *lahatsa* is used to refer to “discourse” or “normal elocution” (Michel-Andrianarahinjaka 1987:86–87). The term

lahatsa also means “order, [proper] disposition.” It is used in an ontological and philosophical sense as well, according to Michel-Andrianarahinjaka, to designate the natural or logical or inherent order of things.

Thus it is that a human is born, lives, dies, is poor or rich, falls ill, is healed or dies, or has no descendants...in virtue of *lahatsa*: Whatever happens to an individual, “it is the order of things.” (authors’ translation of Michel-Andrianarahinjaka 1987:86²¹)

Part of the “order of things” has to do with the words of the ancestors, their “messages,” their *hafatsa*, concerning social practices and beliefs. It is important to note that this is the same word used when the knock at the window comes to entice women out from the house where the funeral vigil is being kept (see above discussion). The term the Betsileo use for ancestral wisdom and customary practice is *lova-tsofina*, meaning the “heritage of the ears,” for such traditions are passed down orally through the generations. Included in these ancestral ways are rules of permissible marriage alliances and inheritance. During the *fian-dravanana*, however, the rules of permissible sexual relations, rules that maintain the order of class and of family groups, and more recent rules that define Christian sexual morality are suspended in speech and in practice.²² It is perhaps far from accidental then that images of “a message” (*hafatsa*) and “[delivering that message by] putting the mouth close to the ear” (*tohotsofina*) are used to announce and describe the sexual encounters that are an audacious gestural/performative assertion of life in the face of death. A complete exegetical explanation of the metaphors and metonyms of speech and sound are not intended here. In fact, it is the point, perhaps, that the discourse on life and death is not formulaic in the *fian-dravanana*, but rather the materials for continuing discourse on life are brought out in full force and made available to participants. And clearly the discourse of language, sound, and gesture that ensues is not the same in “emotional” tone and content as might appear in other cultures. Yet there may be a message here to be passed on by putting the mouth close to the ear of those who would listen so as to enlarge their own discourse on matters of life and death.

Conclusion

This being a volume deliberately seeking interchange between social anthropology and anthropological archaeology, the reader will ask (as the reviewers of the original draft of this article have already done):

What is the relevance of this discussion to archaeology, outside of the fact that the authors are archaeologists doing ethnography? What have these archaeologists brought of particular interest to their ethnographic inquiry?

Certainly, there are the large cautionary tales that archaeologists are relatively accustomed to at this point. We should not be ethnocentric in imposing our views of life, death, and sex on our interpretations of the archaeological record; we should not necessarily assume that binary opposition characterizes the relationship of life to death in other cultures; and we should not assume that all aspects of a culture’s world view and ethos are recoverable in the archaeological record. Yet, this last point needs fuller attention. Certainly, those who have spoken of the need to introduce gender into the discussions of archaeology have made the critically important point that while one might not always be able to “find women” in the archaeological record, it is the concept of gender that must enter into our theoretical discussions and our research questions. Similarly, while cultural “ideas” and “sentiments” about life and death are difficult to handle with archaeological materials, this does not mean that they are irrelevant to our work. Indeed, they encourage us to ask more audaciously and creatively how we might address such issues. Joyce, Meskell, and Kuijt (this volume) certainly illustrate this point. Our attention is further directed to an area where both ethnography and archaeology might collectively focus to fill in a theoretical sketchiness. Gesture, speech, and material culture are abundantly redundant in the creation and recreation of a world view and ethos at the level of local practice and local knowledge of the societies we study. The detailed discussion of Betsileo funerary practices in this contribution is intended to make this point. We would argue further that we anthropologists, both archaeological and social, need to continue to theoretically refine our appreciation of how material culture is not just an echo or reflection of world view and ethos, but, along with our materiality as humans, is necessarily constitutive of sensuous human practice and critical to our cultural convictions.

Perhaps, more important, however, is the fact that such a volume should encourage us to appreciate our shared agenda, a problem focus that pulls us beyond individual questions and sets of data from individual cultures. No one set of data, no one culture has the entire “message,” even if we listen most closely. We are not so much engaged in cautionary tales across subdisciplines, but, rather, in bringing our pieces of the whole to the table.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. The vocabulary used varies locally. In some cases the term employed is *mitai-paty* (Rainihifina 1975:170). A variant of this previous term, *mitaitra faty*, is also used (personal communication, Clarisse Rasoamampionona Razafindratsima, fall 1996).

2. In the loss of a long-lived senior member of a family, the words offered speak of the joy that should accompany the recognition of a long life led well.

3. By way of a current example, in December 1998 we offered our condolences to a friend/"informant" of over fifteen years. It was a tragic situation; the death of her twenty-year-old granddaughter. Both she and another member of the family in their speeches receiving our condolences repeated the word for "happy" (*faly*) and the derivative of this root, "happiness" (*hafaliana*), over six times within a span of less than two minutes.

4. The most recent field seasons were June–August 1993, December 1994–July 1995, June–August

1996, and July–October 1998 (time of last major paper revisions).

5. It is the case that bones may be transferred from a worn-down tomb to a newer structure and that bones (*faty taolana*) may be brought home for reinterment if the death and original burial has taken place outside the original homeland of the individual. The Betsileo with whom we lived and worked do not see these actions as equivalent to the Merina practice of *famadihana*.

6. These include the Merina, Betsileo, Sihanaka, Vakinankaratra, and Bezanozano.

7. Bateson (1958:2) writes, "The emotional background is causally active within a culture, and no functional study can ever be reasonably complete unless it links up the structure and pragmatic working of the culture with its emotional tone or ethos." In Geertz's (1973:126–27) words, "In recent anthropological discussion, the moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements, have commonly been summed up in the term 'ethos,' while the cognitive, existential aspects have been designated by the term 'world view.'"

8. In such a case one can see the resistance of the Betsileo to treating money as "all-purpose" money, as they use the symbolic value of numbers to bring such references into play.

9. This area is referred to as *kianja ratsy*, loosely translated as "the bad place of public reunion," and is located outside the center of the village. Traditional *kianja* or public meeting areas are centrally located in villages.

10. Vocabulary varies a bit from region to region.

11. It should be noted the *mpinenena* or *mpitataka* mentioned above are not considered formal speech makers.

12. The reference term *mpitondra kizotro* is used for this/these latter individual(s). The term translates as "one who wears the *kizotro*." The *kizotro* is a type of woven rain cover that young boys used to wear when guarding cattle.

13. We thank Clarisse Rasoamampionona Razafindratsima for bringing this proverb to our attention.

14. Indeed, one can "get around" most any taboo with appropriate supplication and excuses to the ancestors. Thus people who are to serve in the military can be excused from dietary taboos, a female archaeologist can obtain permission from the ancestors to wear pants during survey rather than a dress or skirt, and an anthropologist can obtain permission to take

flash photos inside a semisubterranean tomb during a funeral.

15. “Au Betsileo, le mot se rendrait mieux par ‘nuits d’orgies, de ripailles et de beuveries, d’où toutes les lois de la plus élémentaire morale sont exclues.’ C’est une véritable fièvre ou folie de débauches qui ne connaît aucune limite.

“Singulière inversion, pensera-t-on: ce qui devrait être cause de douleur, comme la perte d’un père ou d’une mère, devient occasion d’amusements forcenés. Comment expliquer cette anomalie:

“Réaction violente de la vie contre le mystère et la peur de la mort, détente malade d’une race à qui la pauvreté et la servitude ne donnaient guère d’autres facilités de s’amuser, besoin d’attirer par gloriole le plus de monde possible à l’enterrement, initiation lubrique de la jeunesse, force d’anciennes traditions, il peut y avoir de tout cela dans cette étrange coutume.”

16. “En résumé, dépenses folles, ruines des santés, maladies de toutes sortes, leçons précoces d’immoralité, tel nous apparaît le *fiandravanana*. On a là l’explication des misères de la race et de son appauvrissement.”

17. While DuBois uses the spelling *hafatra*, this is more often pronounced among the Betsileo as *hafatsa*.

18. “On a évidemment beaucoup écrit sur le *fiandravanana*, soit pour en souligner l’étrangeté, soit pour le vitupérer au nom de l’hygiène ou de la morale. Tout n’est pas faux dans ces appréciations; mais il eût fallu aussi dégager la cohérence symbolique de ces excès orgiaques, en tant que réaction de la vie contre la menace de la mort.”

19. This proverb is not exclusive to the Betsileo, however; the term *taroña* is Betsileo dialect.

20. “C’est par le silence qui vient en écho à cet appel que les Betsiléos ‘reconnaissent’ le décès.” Michel-Andrianarahinjaka goes on to point out: “Le silence vient avec la mort, dont il atteste ainsi la présence. C’est sans doute pour exercer cette présence que les Betsiléos se mettent à pousser de grands cris chaque fois qu’il y a mort d’homme, grand cri dont nous retrouvons les échos jusque dans la littérature” (1987:83).

21. “C’est ainsi qu’un être humain naît, vit, meurt, est pauvre ou riche, tombe malade, guérit ou meurt, ou n’a pas de descendance...en vertu du *lahatsa*: quoi qu’il advienne, ‘c’est dans l’ordre des choses.’”

22. One informant suggested that nowadays it is more often a question of sexual joking (*saingisangy*)

in speech than actual physical encounters that characterize the *fiandravanana* of a funeral.

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Section Two

Mortuary Rituals and Social Identities



Mortuary Monuments and Social Change among the Ngaju

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Writing of his travels up the Mahakam River from Samarinda during the late 1870s, Norwegian naturalist Carl Bock recalled his eagerness to visit more of the magnificent tombs built by the eastern region's local peoples: "The Dyak tombs which I had seen along the river-banks on my way up to Long Wai had keenly excited my curiosity, which was increased by the frequent rumours of the grandeur of the burial places of [upriver aristocrats]" (Bock 1985:78). Bock described the tombs as "most substantially-built and elaborately-decorated structures of ironwood, with every crack and crevice carefully filled in with putty made of damar resin and chalk to prevent the inroads of insects. The roofs were of laths of ironwood, imbricated. The walls were carved, and rudely painted with representations of birds or quadrupeds, the favourite crocodile of course not being omitted, and the gables at each end were elaborately carved" (Bock 1985:79).¹ Lavish tombs are not found only in the east, however. Across the island, in the Malaysian State of Sarawak, Berawan Dayaks continue to erect mausoleums to accommodate the remains of some villagers, often those whose descendants possess a rank high enough to amass public assistance in building them. Like those described by Bock, these, too, "are frequently elaborately decorated with fine incised carving in floral, abstract, and anthropomorphic designs, filigree buttresses and ridgepoles, all highlighted in red, white, and black. Often they are decorated with expensive brassware or pottery. Invariably they are carved out of dense hardwoods" (Huntington and Metcalf 1979:135–36).

Among the Ngaju Dayaks of Central Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo, the construction and maintenance of bone repositories is an important facet of the so-called "death cult," a phrase that conjures striking rituals and complex beliefs that have intrigued colonial administrators, missionaries, and anthropologists for 150 years. Ngaju repositories, called *sandung*, are often built in the

style of a miniature house, with a door and windows installed or painted on for the souls' use. The moon and stars are usually depicted on the downriver side of the tomb, and the sun on the upriver side. The moon, stars, and sun are among the cosmological landmarks that souls of the dead must pass on their journey to the underworld.

Sandung are rarely opened, and then only at the conclusion of the secondary mortuary rituals. Secondary treatment of the dead, or *tiwah*, is among the most consequential celebrations associated with Ngaju traditional religion, now called Hindu Kaharingan. During *tiwah*, bones are exhumed and cleansed of any remaining flesh. They are powdered and perfumed, and, near the end of the ritual, arranged inside a mausoleum together with the remains of their predecessors. The grandest *sandung* stand more than two meters above the ground on four thick posts and can hold the remains of fifty or more cognatic kinsmen. Known in the local language as *sandung karatun lumping tabalien*, these mausoleums are preferred by the Kahayan River Ngaju.² In other Ngaju-speaking regions smaller *sandung*, including the *kariring*, which stands on two posts, and the *sandung tunggal*, which stands on one, are more prevalent (Schiller 1997a:59–61). The former houses the remains of a few family members, and the latter often those of only one person. Many Ngaju believe that a high degree of supernatural risk is assumed by anyone who constructs a *sandung*. Laborers are admonished to observe ritual prescriptions until a new mausoleum is consecrated with chants performed by ritual specialists and with sacrificial blood.³ For this reason, families sometimes hire non-Ngaju, or Ngaju who have converted to Christianity, to perform the work (Figure 6.1). Lately, on economic grounds, or to lessen the risk of supernatural reprisal should mistakes be made during construction, some sponsors of *tiwah* have taken to building *sandung* from cement rather than the traditional material, ironwood.



Figure 6.1. A Christian carver at work on a Kaharingan repository. The beads around his neck are intended to provide supernatural protection. 1996.

Bits of mirror, broken glass, or tile are often pressed into the drying cement to enhance the tomb's visual appeal.

The first step in building a mausoleum is deciding where to put it. There are no rules to determine where precisely a *sandung* must be placed, and the decision depends on family preferences or the desires of the deceased. Ngaju *sandung* are usually located behind homes, although they are occasionally erected near riverbanks or along a village's main street. Given that the latter are especially subject to the scrutiny of passersby, a prominent *sandung* is usually particularly elaborately carved and painted. Should some inhabitants of a village decide to move, they may disassemble their *sandung* and transport it with them or retrieve it at a later time. Relocating a *sandung* is acceptable as long as rituals are enacted to ensure the safety of the living, the satisfaction of the dead, and the compliance of the denizens of the supernatural world (Figure 6.2).

In June 1996, I made my fourth trip to Central Kalimantan to study the death rituals of the Ngaju Dayaks. I was joined there by a film crew from National

Geographic Television.⁴ We came at the invitation of one of my friends, the head sponsor of a *tiwah*, who had asked that a film be made about the ritual he would be hosting in the village of Petak Putih. Petak Putih is located in the middle reaches of the Katingan River, west of the Kahayan. Countless *tiwah* had already been enacted there; among the village's oldest structures were iron-wood posts from a *sandung* reportedly erected 350 years before. Just as those weathered posts revealed how prominently past *tiwah* had figured in local tradition, the *sandung* constructed for the ritual-in-progress suggested the establishment of new customs. Sponsors' manipulations of long-standing practices regarding the construction and location of *sandung* offer clues to social transformations taking place in Petak Putih and elsewhere in the Ngaju area.

In addressing these transformations, this chapter seeks to extend our knowledge of how the manipulation of material culture may figure in the construction and expression of new social forms. It examines how some villagers' willingness to construct a mausoleum complex



Figure 6.2. Erecting a repository. The supporting posts were salvaged from an earlier *sandung* elsewhere. 1996.

in a style that they identified as “foreign” articulates with broader issues concerning cultural representation and identity. These include the relationships among religious modernization, an evolving Dayak political consciousness, and regional development, including tourism. Participation in Kaharingan death rituals has long served the purpose of establishing identity and demarcating the parameters of a social universe. Notions of identity today are changing, however, as local people attempt to define what it means to be an adherent of Hindu Kaharingan, and, too, a Dayak generally. This chapter contends that, in the material component of their rituals of death, indigenous religious leaders have identified a source of symbolic capital that can be exploited in their efforts to establish a congregation and influence its future by recasting its past.

With regard to exploitation of this capital, I began to notice quickly the differences between this particular *tiwah* and those I had attended in the past. For example, as we approached the ritual’s climax, sponsors arranged kinsmen’s exhumed bones in gongs balanced on tripods at the village’s downriver edge.

The tripods stood alongside ironwood mausoleums, clustered to form a complex near the Hindu Kaharingan Meeting Hall. There were to be fourteen tombs in all: eleven were newly constructed, mostly *sandung keratun*, and three were relocated, including two *kariring*. The *kariring* already contained remains, but the new *sandung* were empty. They would be consecrated by ritual specialists as final resting places for the bones of the dead only after receiving finishing touches of paint and blood (Figure 6.3). When I commented on the grandeur of the new *sandung*, builders quickly volunteered that they were typical of those found on the Kahayan River. They were instructed by the Hindu Kaharingan Council, they explained, to build them in this way, and noted the expense of erecting ironwood ossuaries after cement, the cheaper, more “modern” alternative, was disallowed.

The preponderance of *sandung karatun* was not the only innovation, however. Repository complexes are scarce, and those in which the bones of unrelated dead are housed in close proximity are rarer still.⁵ According to adherents of Kaharingan, noncognates may be interred



Figure 6.3. A villager makes offerings of rice and blood to a new sandung. A kariring is in the background. 1996.

in the same graveyard. Graveyards, however, are impermanent, mere stopover points for souls and bodies on the way to exhumation and secondary treatment. In the afterlife, an extended family is said to dwell together forever in the animate essence of the bone repository (*ganan sandung*) that has been erected on their behalf. Little indeed of Ngaju eschatology is devoted to describing relations with one's neighbors in the upperworld. The construction of the Petak Putih complex, considered together with other changes in the format of *tiwah*, suggests the emergence of practices that reflect a reconceptualization of the indigenous religion and encourages acceptance of the notion of a Kaharingan religious community. In short, the spatial patterning of Ngaju tombs has now become significant. Mortuary displays are becoming linked to the establishment of corporate indigenous religious identity in this world and the next, as well as individual or family identities, as will be shown below.

A brief introduction to Katingan society, to Kaharingan, and to secondary treatment of the dead begins my discussion. The chapter then turns to an examination of how religious modernization and other phenomena associated with modernization have affected indigenous notions of identity. It demonstrates how a changing notion of identity may be transforming practices related to final storage of the remains of the dead. It suggests, too, that changing storage practices may be affecting Kaharingan religious identity in a novel way. It ends by exploring analogies and dissimilarities between the construction of Ngaju mortuary complexes and the erection of death edifices elsewhere in Borneo. Although the focus of this discussion is a Southeast Asian society, attempts by other societies to manipulate mortuary behavior and thereby negotiate new social relationships and moral frameworks have been documented by cultural anthropologists and archeologists elsewhere (Hutchinson and Aragon 2000; Kuijt this volume). The present chapter is a contribution to that larger literature.

The Katingan River Ngaju and Their Neighbors

Central Kalimantan is one of four provinces of Indonesian Borneo. It comprises an area of nearly 154,000 square kilometers of jungle, swamp, forest, and swidden fields. Eleven major rivers and eighty small ones are located there. One of the longest is the Katingan.⁶

Although this chapter refers to Katingan peoples and to the Ngaju generally, for the most part Dayak identity traditionally centered on kin groups rather than on

"tribes" or ethnic groups (Schiller 1997b). The word *ngaju* itself originally had pejorative connotations. People on different rivers often considered their geographic neighbors to be enemies and thus as potential sources of heads or of slaves who would be sacrificed during *tiwah*. In general, people continue to identify themselves with regard to the river on which they live. They point to dialectical and ritual variations, such as the difference between large Kahayan *sandung* and the smaller Katingan variety, to underscore their uniqueness.

This sense of difference is manifested, too, in marriage practices and supernatural beliefs. The Ngaju practice bilateral kinship and prefer cousin marriage.⁷ Marriage between cousins protects against the threat of miscegenation with a kind of supernatural being known as the *hantuen*. *Hantuen* are believed to have the ability to assume human guise and to infiltrate and destroy families through in-marriage. Today, as in the past, a Dayak community may mass to identify and expunge a *hantuen* believed to be hiding in their midst (Schiller 1987).

Most Ngaju believe in the existence of *hantuen*. Not all, however, embrace Hindu Kaharingan. Christian missionaries have been active among the local peoples of this region for about 150 years. The highly contested relationship between religion and identity complicates any study of Ngaju ethnicity. In former times, some converts to Christianity changed ethnic affiliations when they changed faiths. Some went so far as to claim that they were no longer Dayaks. While many Ngaju today are Christians and a few are Muslims, an increasingly vocal minority continues to adhere to the local faith.

In the past, the indigenous religionists of Central Kalimantan engaged in largely private ecstatic rituals and an array of kin group-centered rituals. By the mid-1950s, this indigenous configuration of beliefs and practices had been given the name Kaharingan. The most complex practices are associated with Kahayan peoples, and Kahayan *tiwah* are widely recognized as the lengthiest and most expensive in Central Kalimantan. The goals of *tiwah* are varied, but the primary one is to transport the souls of the dead, as well as of a house, animals, and slaves, to the zenith of a cosmological upperworld. Once they have relocated, ancestors pass eternity in the comfortable surroundings their descendants have provided. To this end, the physical remains of the dead, the bones, are exhumed, cleaned, and deposited in *sandung*. Ancestors dwell together in the animate essence of their bone repository, which in the upperworld transforms into a house. During subsequent *tiwah*, tombs may be reopened and more remains added, thereby increasing the size of an upperworld household. The remains of a non-

consanguineal spouse cannot be placed in an extended family's repository, for fear that the spouse is an undetected *hantu* whose efforts to torment others would continue in the next life.

Households of dead ancestors are monoreligious, but those of the living rarely are. Most extended and many nuclear families are composed of both indigenous religionists and those who have converted from the old faith. Religious tolerance is an issue of significance well beyond Ngaju families; it is a national concern. The ideal of tolerance is delineated in the first of Indonesia's "Five Principles," which establishes the nation as a religious state but not as one based on a particular religion.

This ideal of peaceful coexistence notwithstanding, some citizens are wary of what they perceive as a political drift toward "Islamicization." Indigenous religionists have long been alarmed over this trend. They are equally alarmed over the diminishment of their numbers through conversion to Christianity. In 1980, in response to a campaign for some form of official recognition that had been waged for decades, the Department of Religion declared Kaharingan a variety of Hinduism. One striking development has been the rapid growth of the Hindu Kaharingan administrative bureaucracy (Schiller 1993). Indigenous religious affairs are supervised by an organization known as the Great Council (*Majelis Besar Agama Hindu Kaharingan*). The council is headquartered in Palangka Raya, the provincial capital, on the Kahayan River. Its reach extends far beyond that city to include hundreds of representatives at the village level. Many of the council's efforts are directed at establishing a "congregation." Others concern the codification of doctrine and the regularization of ritual, especially *tiwah*. Kahayan practice serves as a model in this regard.

Kahayan *tiwah* last up to thirty-three days and may cost tens of thousands of dollars. The decision to hold Petak Putih's *tiwah* in the Kahayan style was made by council members, including the head sponsor. Their decision had especial import in that this celebration was touted as the first "promotional *tiwah*" by the regional Tourism Development Office. A brochure was prepared with pictures of the various mortuary edifices erected at a Kahayan-style *tiwah* (Pemerintah Kabupaten Daerah 1996). Although few if any tourists were actually expected at the ritual, there would certainly be many local visitors, and council members maintained that this would be an opportunity for locals and guests to observe how to hold a *tiwah* correctly. The head sponsor also had a longer-term goal in mind. By urging residents to establish an ossuary complex and to construct all of the ossuaries in it from ironwood, he hoped to promote co-

operation among the members of the Kaharingan congregation and to establish an attractive and permanent tourist venue (Figure 6.4). A particularly bold element in this strategy was to invite unrelated families from nearby villages to participate in the celebration. Thus while many of the ritual sponsors were separated by blood, a innovation within Kaharingan tradition, they were united nonetheless as part of a religious community. Given that Christians often maintain separate Christian cemeteries, the notion of a Kaharingan complex, though novel, was appealing to some indigenous religious purists.

The council's stake in promoting religious tolerance as well as in organizing the Kaharingan congregation to function as an interest group is clear. It downplays longstanding ritual differences among Ngaju on different rivers and promotes *tiwah* as a regional attraction. However, the latter is problematic for some non-Kaharingan Ngaju, who reject what they perceive as the intimation that Kaharingan is a primordial constituent of Ngaju identity, and problematic for those Kaharingan villagers who reject the notion of adapting local ritual forms to accommodate imported models.

On Differences in *Tiwah*

As noted earlier, the villagers of Petak Putih were quite willing to discuss how their celebration departed from the local norm.⁸ Some were anxious about the differences and feared that supernatural reprisal might follow mistakes or deviations from tradition.⁹ Katingan River villagers describe their *tiwah* as shorter and simpler than that of Kahayan peoples. A similar portrait emerges from older reports. According to Carl Lumholtz's 1920 study, "Funeral Customs of Katingans," the celebration "lasts for one week, during which food and tuak [rice wine] are provided" (Lumholtz 1920:362). A male or female priest-doctor then "inaugurates" a *kapatong*, or carving of a servant for the deceased (Lumholtz 1920:365). Kahayan *tiwah*, by contrast, last for a month and involve the participation of seven or more priests. As established earlier, Katingan *sandung* are also generally much smaller than those found on the Kahayan.

Notwithstanding the worries of some participants, others were pleased that their *tiwah* was markedly different from those of the past. They interpreted the media attention that the ritual attracted—which included national television coverage, the attendance of the National Geographic film crew, and the presence of reporters from newspapers and news magazines—as evidence that the



Figure 6.4. Assembling the mausoleum complex. 1996.

council had made the correct decision in requiring them to adapt their ritual practices.

Mortuary Rituals, Material Culture, and Cultural Representation among the Ngaju

When Kaharingan was declared “Hindu” twenty years ago, there were many who predicted that in a short while its local cast would entirely disappear. To the contrary, however, Kaharingan has not disappeared. In fact, some Dayaks have even decided to “return to Kaharingan” (*kembali Kaharingan*), that is, convert to the faith. The council has sought to foster this dynamism in various ways, including classes in religion, the establishment of a college and seminary (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Hindu Kaharingan*), weekly prayer meetings, and strategic positioning of a bureaucracy with branches at every administrative level. The organization’s staff enforce adherence to council-sponsored programs and oversee the regularization of *tiwah* and other celebrations through written warnings and fines.

It is likely that mandated ritual forms and cooperative ritual efforts between unrelated Kaharingan fami-

lies will become even more widespread if the Hindu Kaharingan Council maintains its authority in this region. Nevertheless, the change may be slow. As one group of guests from a neighboring village commented during their visit to Petak Putih: “Next year our family will perform our *tiwah* our way. Ours will be a Katingan ritual. Kahayan people and Katingan people are different people, so we do our rituals differently. That’s custom.” Some guests at the celebration remarked that it was not surprising to see a subdistrict representative of the Kaharingan council stumble and fall when he attempted to stab a sacrificial animal, or that it rained at strange intervals throughout the celebration. They interpreted these events as indications of their ancestors’ dissatisfaction in being subjected to a foreign style of ritual. One well-known local figure refused to build a *sandung* in the new complex at all, saying his parents wanted to remain beside the family home, as tradition dictated.

The Kaharingan council also plans to continue to publicize *tiwah* as a “tourism attraction” (*daya tarik pariwisata*) in order to foster its agenda of religious reform and to attract regional development. As the most visually exciting and lengthiest *tiwah*, Kahayan

celebrations lend themselves to promotion in this manner. A council member likened the completion of the Petak Putih mausoleum complex to the refurbishment of Bali's Tanah Lot temple complex in this regard.¹⁰ The head sponsor, himself highly placed in the Hindu Kaharingan religious bureaucracy, spoke for many adherents when he remarked, "This province needs *tiwah*. The government knows it. So do people who have converted [to other religions]. The government wants tourists to come here. Tourism contributes to development. What will tourists come to Central Kalimantan to see if not *tiwah* and the orangutan preserve?" By doing their part to facilitate tourism, the sponsors of *tiwah* hope to reap the accompanying benefits of enhanced infrastructure. For example, at about the same time the head sponsor applied to the council for permission to enact the celebration, he also applied to the provincial governor's office for a grant that would assist in the village's "social development." Part of the social development money would be used for a generator so that villagers could install electric lights for use throughout the *tiwah* and after. Although the governor did not attend the celebration, the sub-provincial regent did. When the regent arrived he was accompanied by an entourage that included newspaper reporters and cameramen sent to document his assisting in animal sacrifices. In videotaped speeches, the regent pledged financial support for several village development initiatives. The head sponsor then said that he hoped this would include funds to finance a hostel where tourists could remain overnight while they visited the mausoleum complex and experienced "genuine Kaharingan Dayak culture."

With regard to the council's incipient plans to advertise the new death complex, it is instructive to compare this instance of mortuary monumentalization with those of other Borneo peoples. An important difference between the Ngaju and many other Dayaks is that, among the Ngaju, every adherent of the traditional religion is entitled to secondary treatment and final entombment in a *sandung*.¹¹ Although the repositories of notables or of indigenous aristocrats are sometimes more costly and elaborate than those of other villagers, it is incumbent upon the living to collect the bones of all their dead and place them in repositories. If the remains are irretrievable, the *sandung* is opened nonetheless and a handful of earth is sealed inside to replace the bones. Because *tiwah* are expensive to perform, extended family members are expected to pool their resources to manage the cost. *Tiwah* are rarely held for a single individual be-

cause of their expense. Instead, families wait until there are several deceased kinsmen in need of ritual processing, then schedule a *tiwah*. Unlike the Ngaju, the Berawan, mentioned at the outset of this chapter, are not compelled to provide secondary treatment for every villager. Nevertheless, an important parallel between the two cases suggests itself. The Berawan strategically erect mausoleums near riverbanks and houses because they want them to be visible. Aristocrats hope that passersby will "wonder at the power of the architects" who built the tombs (Huntington and Metcalf 1979:150). Similarly the centralized *sandung* complex at Petak Putih is intended to be imposing. Ritual sponsors and Hindu Kaharingan council members hope that by encouraging the joint celebration of *tiwah* by unrelated families, and by centralizing these and other mausoleums, visitors will be impressed by the vitality of the tradition that has yielded this new kind of corporate religious event.

Earlier in this chapter Indonesia was described as a profoundly diverse society where the ideal of tolerance is a strategy for coexistence. By demanding adherence to monotheistic religion and to a popular model of religious practice, some national leaders may hope to foster a milieu in which minority attachments and primordialism decline. Indigenous activists are discovering, however, that even as they operate within the parameters set by the government, their reform program has won positive publicity and benefits for adherents of Central Kalimantan's local faith, assisted their efforts to objectify Kaharingan culture and religion as resources for political mobilization, and contributed to the emergence of a notion of an indigenous religious community. Still, religious reform appears to require leaps of faith. One telling incident involved the exhumation of the body of a possible *hantu* for Petak Putih's *tiwah*. Although I was unaware of his concern at the time, the head sponsor eventually confided to me how worried he was when one particular grave was opened. He had long suspected that the man buried within it was a *hantu*. If that were true, when the grave was opened, its occupant might fly up and attack us, desperate for the taste of blood after so many years. Allowing the grave to be opened at the same time his own relatives were assembled was a risk, the sponsor said. But the suspected *hantu*'s family were active in local Kaharingan religious affairs and wanted to contribute a large *sandung* to the ossuary complex. For the head sponsor, the benefits outweighed the risks. He added that he also counted on the fact that even if the *hantu* did make it to the upperworld, his own deceased father's level of religious expertise was sufficient to keep

it at bay. To the sponsor's relief, nothing untoward occurred when the exhumation took place, and the mausoleum that was constructed to house those remains was among the most elaborate in the complex.

In conclusion, it is clear that the rituals performed on behalf of Kaharingan dead, and their potential to shape conceptualizations of identity, will be a focus of local attention for some time. *Tiwah*, like other communal rituals studied by anthropologists, have the potential to create and foster sentiments of affinity, on the one hand, and of estrangement, on the other. Through the elaboration of Ngaju mortuary behavior and the manipulations of material culture discussed in this chapter, it appears that an existing notion of identity has been challenged as part of the process of modeling a new notion of community. It is likely that other aspects of Ngaju material expression, too, will come to play a role in the process whereby indigenous peoples attempt to create new social meaning from old ritual forms, and to make new identities visible and publicly recognized.

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Notes

1. Bock identified these tombs as belonging to Modang Dayak aristocrats. Sketches can be found in Bock's account of his travels through Borneo and Sumatra. See *The Head-Hunters of Borneo*, plates 8 and 9.

2. In the Ngaju ritual language, *basa sangiang*, this type of repository is called *Parung Batu Ngareheng Tandang Siru Liang Ngangkuling Tambun*.

3. For example, workers are expected to reside at the site where the *sandung* is being constructed, beneath a roof of cloth or plastic sheeting (*pasah sandung*), for as long as it takes to assemble and decorate the mausoleum.

4. The National Geographic Television film based on the Petak Putih *tiwah* is entitled "Borneo: Beyond the Grave." For more information, see: www.nationalgeographic.com/tv/bts/reeltime/reel2.html. Readers who would like to know more about the film-making experience may consult Schiller (2001), "Talking Heads: Capturing Dayak Deathways on Film."

5. In a village downriver from Petak Putih there is another repository complex, established several decades ago by converts to Christianity who decided to move their ancestors to a central location after their descendants had abandoned the local faith. A photograph of that site, as well as a discussion of some other elements of mausoleum decoration, can be found in Schiller 1991.

6. On some maps the Katingan River is referred to as the Mendawai River.

7. Both cross and parallel cousin marriages are acceptable.

8. In addition to those described in this chapter, the Petak Putih *tiwah* was also adapted to follow the Kahayan model in other ways. See Schiller, "How to Hold a 'Tiwah'" (Forthcoming).

9. At the same time, some anxiety over how to enact *tiwah* properly is characteristic of the Kaharingan approach to ritual. Participants' desire to "get the ritual right" is linked to ideas regarding custom. The transgression of custom may evoke supernatural reprisal and a ritual must be held to "sweep away" the supernatural pollution wrought by ignoring it. Because the Petak Putih villagers were unsure of Kahayan custom, many worried that they might transgress it and anger their dead kin. At the same time, according to some celebrants, by not performing *tiwah* in the Katingan manner participants were already at risk.

10. Tanah Lot is one of the most sacred temples on the island of Bali. A luxury tourist resort was recently built there. For more on the temple and the controversy surrounding the construction of the resort, see Picard 1997:204–6.

11. An exception was the case of slaves, who were denied entombment in *sandung* (Schiller 1997a:97–99).

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Place, Death, and the Transmission of Social Memory in Early Agricultural Communities of the Near Eastern Pre-Pottery Neolithic

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To say that a specific place is a sacred place is not simply to describe a piece of land, or just locate it in a certain position in the landscape. What is known as a sacred site carries with it a whole range of rules and regulations regarding people's behavior in relation to it, and implies a set of beliefs to do with the non-empirical world, often in relation to the spirits of the ancestors, as well as more remote or powerful gods or spirits. (Carmichael et al. 1994:3)

Relationships to places may also find expression through the agencies of myth, prayer, music, dance, art, architecture, and in many communities, recurrent forms of religious and political rituals. (Basso 1996:57)

From an anthropological and archaeological perspective one of the many interesting aspects of mortuary behavior centers on how and why the living and the dead are physically and symbolically linked through material culture and the use of space. Although not often conceptualized as such by Near Eastern archaeologists, I argue that archaeological case studies from early agricultural villages of the Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period (MPPNB) (c. 10,500–9,500 calendar years before present) of the Near East provide an important perspective for anthropologists and ethnographers interested in understanding some of the interweaving of social memory, death, and place. Expanding upon important descriptive studies of skull removal in the southern Levantine Aceramic Neolithic (Bienert 1991; HersHKovitz and Gopher 1990; Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl 1981), some researchers suggest that these practices may have been linked to ancestor worship in general (e.g., Amiran 1962; Garfinkel 1994) and that skull removal reflects one of several thematically interrelated aspects of a ritual belief system focused on enhancing community cohesion and reaffirming household and community beliefs (see Cauvin 1994; Goring-Morris 2000; Kuijt 1996, 2000a). Another major impact of recent archaeological research on the Neolithic of the Near East has been an increased attention to

how civic and ritual governance might have been organized at the household and community level, and how these structures may be linked to the crafting of identities through mortuary rituals (e.g., Bar-Yosef and Belfer-Cohen 1989; Byrd 1994; Cauvin 1994; Garfinkel 1994; Goring-Morris 2000; Kuijt 1996, 2000b; Rollefson 1997, 2000; Voigt 1983). Reflecting upon the growing archaeological evidence for standardization within Neolithic mortuary practices and ethnographic literature outlining the links between ritual specialists and the emotional and social power of mortuary ritual events (e.g., Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997), I believe that strong arguments can be made for the existence of ritual, if not community, leadership in early Neolithic communities. Within the context of this discussion, I propose that skull removal in general, and the elaborate preparation of skulls as ritual furniture in specific, had profound implications for how communities and individuals created identities and negotiated power and authority in their settlements. Within this chapter I argue that to understand social organization within these communities, it is necessary to understand how mortuary and ritual practices were interwoven with the use of residential space and to consider how and why these people created shared social meanings and memory.

Ethnographic and Archaeological Perspectives on Social Memory

As cited at the start of this essay, Carmichael and Basso exquisitely highlight some of the intimate and highly complex interweaving involved in the social formation of memory, rules of conduct, mortuary practices, and sacred space. The uses and meanings of spaces are, of course, contextualized in time, experience, and memory. While there are numerous moments in which the meanings of space become elusive to anthropologists and multidimensional to people using it, there are few moments as strong, powerful, and visual as that of death. Death is one of those critical cultural moments in which people and communities define and negotiate social relationships. Depending upon the cultural and temporal context, mortuary ritual serves as a device of powerful social regulation and a consolidator of political, economic, and social power among select individuals within communities, as well as a potential means of social advancement facilitating the breakdown of egalitarian belief systems. Archaeological and ethnographic studies (e.g., Carr 1995; Chesson 1999; Hodder 1990, 1994; McGuire 1983; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997) have also directed new attention toward the processes by which mortuary practices idealize and mask daily social relations, and they continue to debate the importance of the living and their perceived status of the deceased. Part of this is the recognition that in some contexts mortuary rituals provide a complex and highly visible arena in which the living cope with issues of mortality and redefine the existing social order. In some cases, for example, mortuary practices enact an important integrative function within many communities and serve to maintain or increase solidarity by highlighting real or perceived links within and between individuals, households, and communities (Berreman 1981; Flanagan 1989; Flanagan and Rayner 1988; Gerlach and Gerlach 1988; McKinnon 1991, 1995; Paynter 1989; Rayner 1988).

As an outgrowth of the awareness of the integrative nature of mortuary practices, many archaeologists and ethnographers concerned with studies of death and mortuary ritual have directed new attention toward how identities and memories, be they of the communities, household, or individual, are actively negotiated in mortuary ceremonies and are linked to the spaces in which they are enacted (Buikstra and Charles 1999; Chesson 1999; Kan 1989; Kuijt 1996; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997). Drawing upon ethnographic studies, archaeologists seek to understand how the nature of iden-

tity, at an individual or collective level, is expressed through such things as public displays of emotion, material culture associated with rituals, and the built environment within which mortuary rituals are situated, and how these aspects of life provide new insights into the social construction of collective memory and identity. Needless to say, memory and identity are closely inter-related: memories of the past, be they conceptual or factual, serve to negotiate and construct identities in the present and future. The power of memory centers on its ability to be transmitted, articulated, and understood. As with any narrative or story (e.g., the stories that archaeologists and ethnographers tell each other about their field experiences), through time this often brings about conventionalization and simplification in the transmission of the memory, script, and associated imagery. As noted by Fentress and Wickham (1992:47–48), “[Memory is] conventionalized, because the image has to be meaningful for an entire group; simplified, because in order to be generally meaningful and capable of transmission, the complexity of the image must be reduced as far as possible.”

Social memory and the conceptualization of the past in mortuary ritual is intimately interconnected with oral tradition, images, and location. Many ethnographers, and to a certain extent some archaeologists, seek to understand the links between collective social memory, material culture, and the transmission of order and authority at the household and community levels. Fentress and Wickham (1992), for example, outline two potential mechanisms by which the ordering and transmission of social memory is accomplished: *memory of words* and *images and memory*, to which I add *memory and place*.

Ethnographers and ethnohistorians provide many examples of *memories of words*, consisting of both the oral and narrative use of words in crafting social memory, and note how mortuary ritual serves as a critical forum for the presentation and reinforcement of oral traditions (e.g., Fentress and Wickham 1992; Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Many oral traditions are focused on origins, lineage, and genealogy, articulating the links, be they real or perceived, within and between communities and households. In most prehistoric cases, however, researchers are unable to deal with this subject except by incorporating the possibility of oral transmission in their reconstruction of past rituals of memorialization.

Along similar lines, *images* and *memory* are closely connected. Through the process of codification, images, objects, and ritual furniture in mortuary ceremonies embody meanings and symbolism that often span generations and that are readily recognizable by community

members. At the same time, the conceptual relationship between images, memory, and meaning(s) is dynamic, flexible, and negotiated by individuals, households, and communities. Moreover, the standardization of symbols in household ritual or mortuary practices, such as the number of objects and their significance, is central to their intended meaning and can be employed to reinforce broader spiritual beliefs and community ethos within and between households (Hodder 1990; McKinnon 1991; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). As with the use of images in mortuary ritual, social memory is also intimately linked to human actions in *space*. As outlined by a number of researchers (e.g., Basso 1996; Buikstra and Charles 1999; Carmichael et al. 1994), relationships, memory, and identification of space are deliberately and otherwise represented and defined on a regular basis. Households and communities perform and reproduce acts that define and express their own sense of place and, by extension, who they are. The authority and emotional power of mortuary events are, at least in part, focused on a circumscribed area within the community, a perception of space in which the past, present, and future are interwoven.

Following these works, I view MPPNB mortuary practices as a form of human behavior that rather than being a direct reflection of social organization is actively chosen by people in relation to a broader base of specific beliefs based on world view and symbolic themes. Echoing others (e.g., Snead and Preucel 1996), I suggest that the spatial context of any mortuary practice is culturally defined: it cannot be understood without reference to a world view that integrates place and space in the production of meaning. While noting that all mortuary practice, at least on some level, touches upon aspects of the past, collective memory, and ideology, it is important to recognize that these links can be more pronounced in some ethnographic, archaeological, and cultural contexts than others. Morris (1991) makes this important point in differentiating mortuary ritual from ancestor cult. He argues that mortuary ritual is primarily focused on rite-of-passage ceremonies that separate the living from the dead while ancestor cult is focused on continued access to the deceased in the afterworld. With the latter, the affairs of the living and the dead are thus intertwined. The sanctity of this connection is also reinforced through widespread household and community participation in ritual action. Mortuary practices often involve a communal event, usually controlled and directed by a limited number of individuals and enacted for an audience present at the event. The power of ritual as a cohesive force is based, in part, on the realization that mortuary practice is a form of public action, a social drama designed and conducted by

the living, often to elicit community participation, and is not always, therefore, a direct reflection of the status, authority, and importance of the deceased (Geertz 1973; Hertz 1960; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; van Gennep 1960). In this framework, broader social ethos and mortuary practices are viewed as being interlinked and mutually reinforcing. As argued by Geertz (1980:32), aspects of affinity and kin relations can be expressed through the expression of, among other things, differential language use, marriage rules, dress, and, importantly, “meticulously defined ritual rights and obligations, perhaps the most notable of which centered on cremation and death.” Studies of mortuary ritual by ethnographers (e.g., Hertz 1960; Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997, this volume; Weiner 1976) provide an excellent framework for examining expressions of affinity and the negotiation of relationships in the archaeological mortuary context of early agricultural village communities of the Near East.

Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic Mortuary Practices

Before exploring the Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period (MPPNB) case study of how individuals and communities crafted social memory through mortuary practices, and more specifically through the linking of *images and memory* and *memory and place*, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the nature of mortuary practices in these communities. To some readers this case study of the Neolithic will seem somewhat familiar, for in many ways the MPPNB¹ characterizes the exotic and highly visual nature of the Neolithic in the minds of the general public and archaeologists alike. During the period of c. 10,500 to 9,500 calendar years before present, early agricultural communities emerged within and outside of the Mediterranean zone of the southern Levant. Our most detailed understanding of this period comes from settlements within this zone. These communities, now identified as Jericho, Kfar HaHoresh, and ‘Ain Ghazal, were characterized by a high degree of sedentism, population aggregation, well-built residential architecture, early use of domesticated plants and animals, long-distance trade and exchange, and highly visual mortuary practices (Figure 7.1). In discussing these trends it is important to recognize that our understanding of this period, and the reconstruction that I present in this essay, is limited by our lack of detailed understanding of the range and variation of practices within and between geographical areas of the southern Levant. Having noted the normative focus of this study, and the potential limitations of this work, the data that are available provide a



Figure 7.1. Early and Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period site distribution in the southern Levant. Note clustering of MPPNB villages and hamlets around the Jordan Valley and the appearance of small settlements and seasonal sites in marginal environmental zones.

highly complex and early case study for the emergence of social differentiation, the links between mortuary practices and social organization, and the ways in which material culture was employed to define household and community identity (readers are referred to the following for more detailed treatments of this period: Bar-Yosef and Belfer-Cohen 1989; Bar-Yosef and Meadows 1995; Bienert 1991; Byrd 1994; Cauvin 1994; Goring-Morris 2000; Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 1998; Rollefson 1997; Rollefson et al. 1992; Kuijt 1994, 1995, 1996).

In examining Pre-Pottery Neolithic mortuary ritual as a social action affecting household and community relations, group cohesion, and the evolution of social differentiation, I assume that these rites and the ways in which people plan and construct space are the material residues of specific practices, and that these highly structured data sets reflect aspects of social arrangements at the individual, household, and community levels.² Although clearly rooted in the Late Natufian period, mortuary systems between c. 13,500 and 11,500 B.P. focused on the interment of single individuals, later removal of the crania, and secondary burial of individual or multiple skulls in ritual events involving household and community representation (Table 7.1; Figures 7.2 and 7.3). Secondary mortuary practices, which can be defined as social acts focused on the regular and socially sanctioned removal of all or part of a deceased individual from some place of temporary storage to a permanent resting place, are highly visual social events within which personal and collective identities are defined and negotiated. Using this framework, I will discuss the implications of Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic secondary mortuary practices, including skull removal, plastering, and caching, and situate these behaviors within the context of early agricultural villages.

With the onset of the MPPNB, at about 10,500 B.P., it appears that communities elaborated and standardized

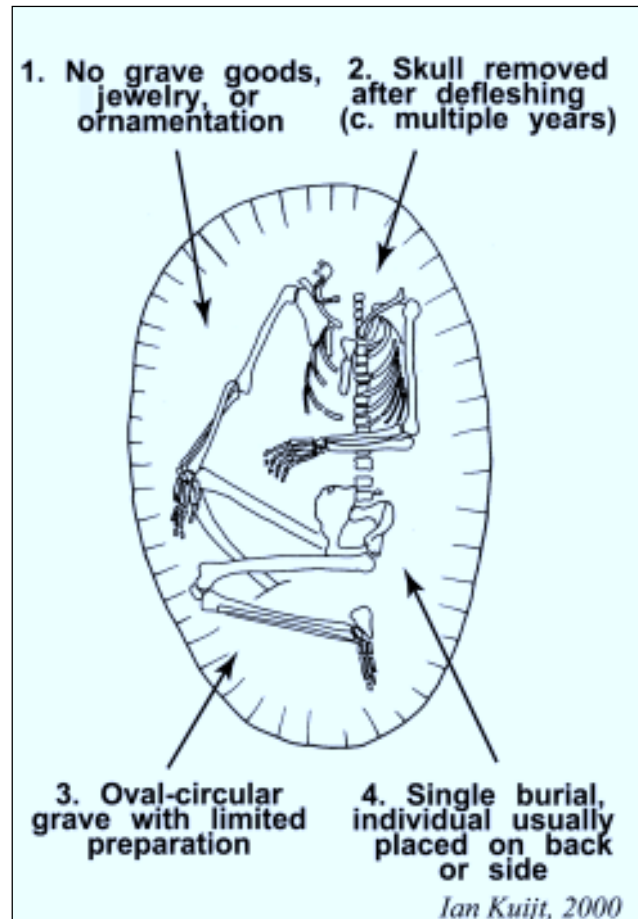


Figure 7.2. Major components of Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period mortuary practices for male and female adults.

existing mortuary rituals with (1) the expansion of secondary mortuary ceremonies, including the collective caching of skulls, usually in extramural locations; (2) the development of a number of elaborate specialized practices to prepare individual or multiple human skulls for burial, including painting, plastering, and adding shell inlays for eyes to create masks; (3) the caching of cultic

Table 7.1. General mortuary practices and their spatial context in the Levantine Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period*

	Mortuary practice	Spatial location
Adults	Primary burial, intact	Courtyard and midden areas outside of structures, underneath plaster floors in residential structures
	Primary burial, skull removed	Courtyard and midden areas outside of structures, underneath plaster floors in residential structures
	Secondary burial, skull caches	Pits in courtyard and midden areas, wall niches inside of residential structures
	Secondary burial	Pits in courtyard and midden areas
Children	Primary burial, intact	Under house walls, in post-sockets for interior supports, and in exterior midden and courtyard areas

*Readers are referred to Goring-Morris 2000, Kuijt 2000b, Rollefson 2000, and Rollefson et al. 1992 for other detailed treatments.

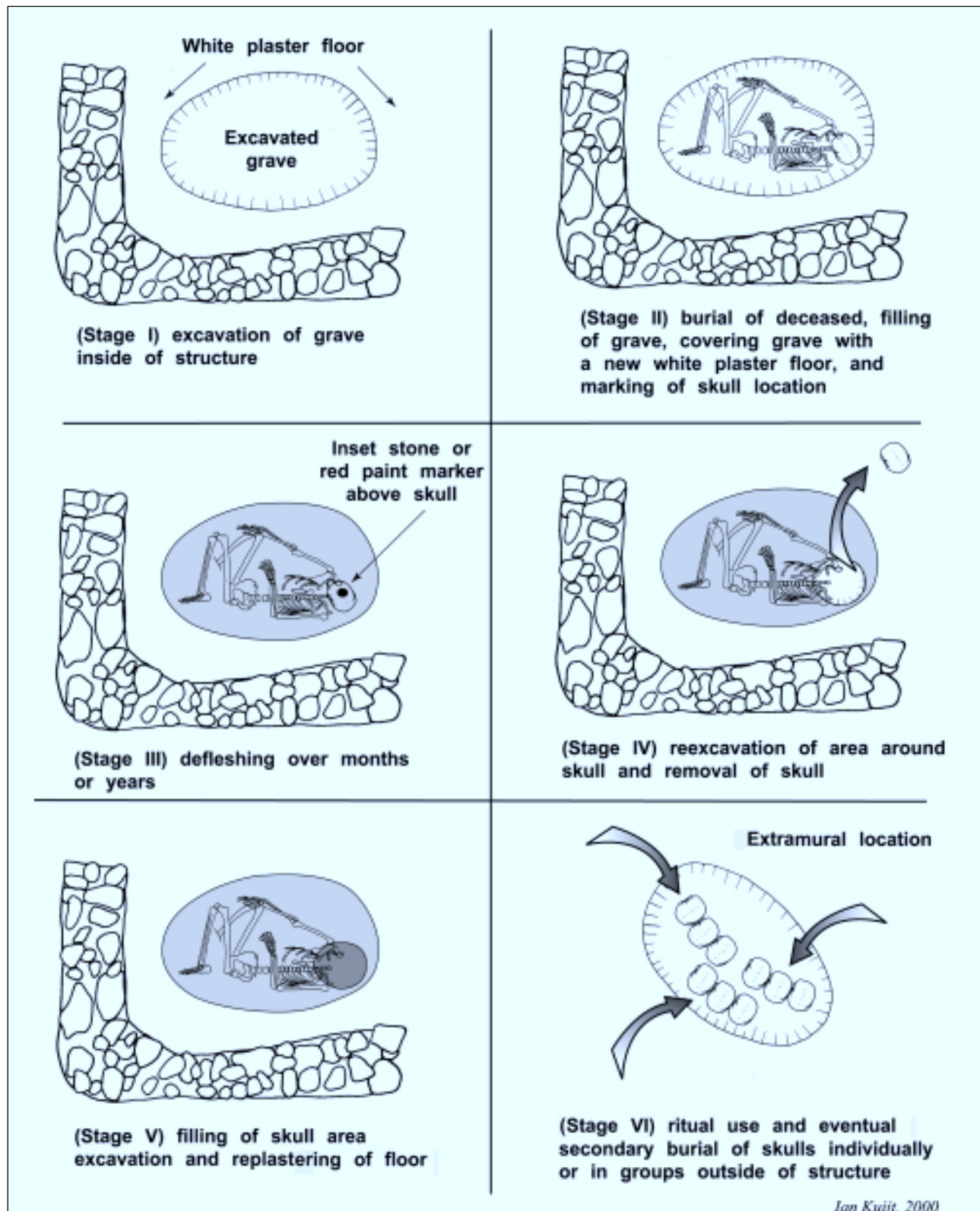


Figure 7.3. Schematic representation of different stages of adult Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period primary and secondary mortuary practices. Illustration is based upon 'Ain Ghazal burial (AG84-3084) (Rollefson 2000) and House 4 (3282) from 'Ain Ghazal (Banning and Byrd 1987). Note that these data are combined for illustrative purposes only and are not spatially associated.

objects and votive offerings, including large human figurines and faunal remains, probably as dedicatory offerings; (4) the development of other forms of ritual, probably focused on the residential unit, that involved the caching of animal figurines; (5) the burial of both male and female adults in single graves, with no grave goods; and (6) the standardization in the number of votive offerings and human skulls in groups of three (see Goring-Morris 2000; Kuijt 2000b; Rollefson 2000 for more detailed discussion of these patterns) (Figure 7.4). While there are several possible interpretations for these developments, I argue that these patterns reflect a profound transition in values, ethics, and world view within Neolithic households and communities within the context of demographic MPPNB changes, and that those rituals stress collective ancestor worship to minimize differences, be they real or perceived, between household members. In the case of southern Levantine MPPNB mortuary and architectural practices, it is important to note how the same material patterns were developed, maintained, and expressed within and between contemporaneous settlements throughout the region (see Banning 1998; Bar-Yosef 1981; Bar-Yosef and Belfer-Cohen 1989; Cauvin 1994; Goring-Morris 2000; Kuijt 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000b; Rollefson 2000; Rollefson et al. 1992 for more detailed considerations of Pre-Pottery Neolithic mortuary practices). This standardization in mortuary practice is all the more important when we consider how it was intimately connected to, and made powerful by, the use and reuse of designated areas of the community. There is, as will be addressed later, an intense interweaving of *images and memory*, and *memory and place*, within these Neolithic communities.

Organization and Standardization of Social Memory in MPPNB Communities

Central to the study of the role of human agency in Neolithic communities is a consideration of how past mortuary behaviors highlight the importance of individual and collective social memory and how these might be manifested in an archaeological context. Different lines of material evidence from MPPNB communities in the southern Levant present researchers with a picture that at first glance appears to be highly contradictory and clearly does not fit existing ethnographic and/or evolutionary models for the emergence of large early agricultural communities and some of the complexities of collective and individualizing social systems (see Feinman 1995; Hayden 1995; Renfrew 1974). I should point out that I am not arguing that communities within

the southern Levantine MPPNB were either group-oriented or individualizing polities, to use Renfrew's (1974) terms. Rather, I want to illustrate that our current understanding of MPPNB archaeological patterning reflects co-existing behaviors that are consistent with elements of both collective and individualizing political systems, and that the creation of social memory, be it through imagery or place, reflects aspects of individual and collective identities. I believe that our anthropological and archaeological understanding of Neolithic social organization must account for these co-existences and strive to consider the social process by which these tensions might have existed. For example, from different perspectives Pre-Pottery Neolithic skull caching and plastering reflects both forms of collective worship of ancestors as well as ritual focused on a specific deceased individual. At the same time, not all members of MPPNB communities were privileged by secondary mortuary practices (Tables 7.2 and 7.3). While there is no question that the process of skull removal and the physical and social transformation of these objects into ritual masks differentially identified community members, such as ritual practitioners with ritual knowledge, this appears to have been balanced or counteracted by other material processes that stressed collective/shared themes, such as standardization of architectural practices, the absence of any grave goods (as seen in the Early Natufian), and the burial of individuals rather than household groups (also characterizing the Early Natufian). Moreover, as noted in many studies of the social impact of secondary mortuary practices, the collective removal and reburial of crania is often viewed as increasing contact and connections between and across household and kin lines (Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997). Thus, I argue that skull removal and plastering served both functions, and that to understand some of the complexities of Neolithic social organization it is necessary to examine some of the co-existing and complementary dimensions of equality and inequality expressed through different kinds of material culture.

In considering the links between mortuary practices and social memory at different scales it is important to note the degree to which people standardized mortuary practices in the MPPNB and that we see the appearance and long-term (c. 1000 year) maintenance of similar practices within and between contemporaneous settlements throughout the Levant and Anatolia (Akkermans and Verhoeven 1995; Bar-Yosef and Belfer-Cohen 1989; Bienert 1991; Cauvin 1994; Kuijt 1996; Rollefson 1997; Rollefson et al. 1992) (Table 7.3; Figure 7.4). On a regional scale co-participation in a broader cultural sphere

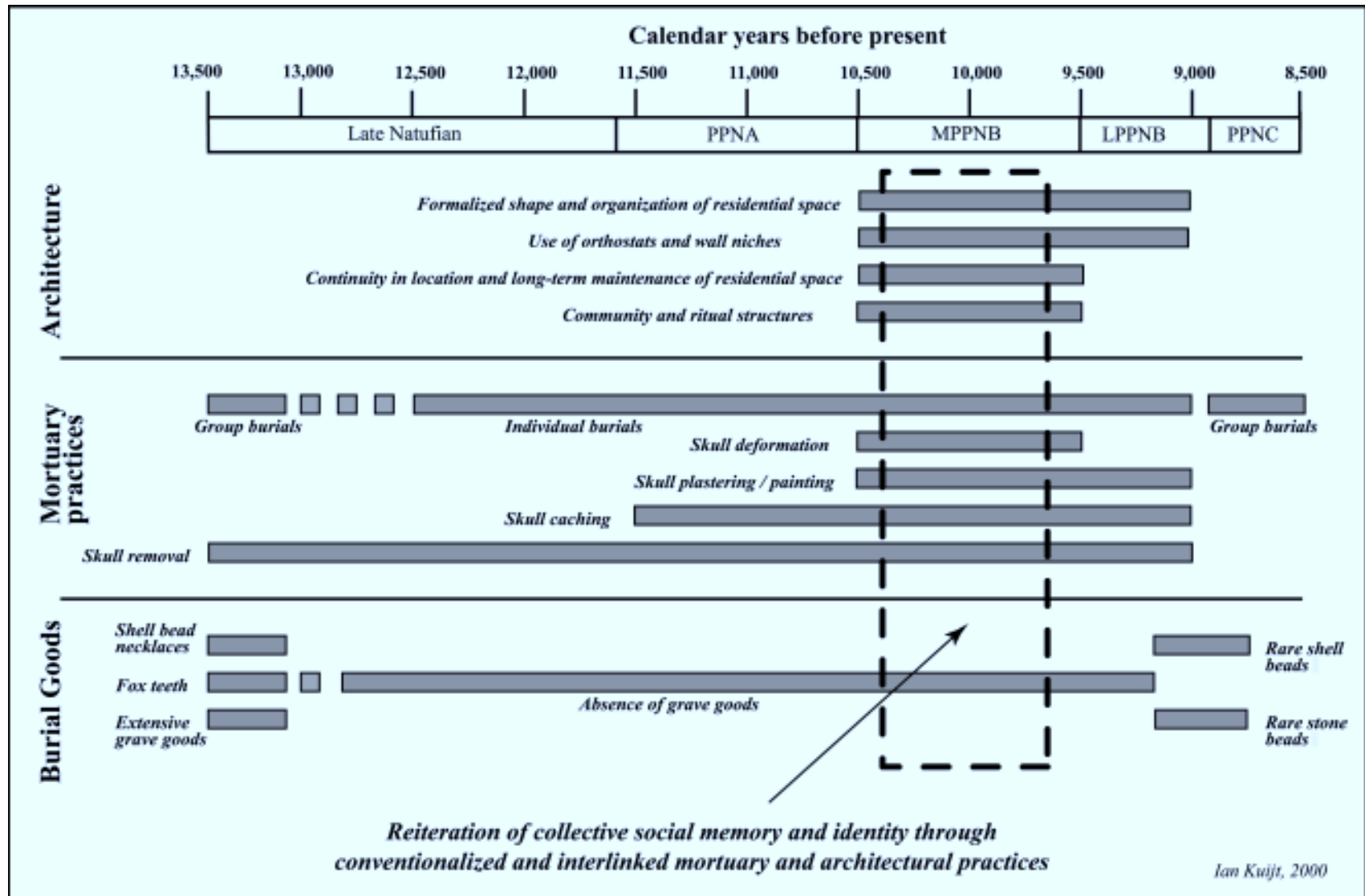


Figure 7.4. Different dimensions of Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period mortuary practices, use of burial goods, and architecture. Note co-occurrence of various mortuary and architectural practices in the Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period.

Table 7.2. Comparison of mortuary characteristics for the MPPNB period occupation at Jericho and 'Ain Ghazal

	Jericho	'Ain Ghazal
No. of individuals of all ages	232 individuals ¹	81 individuals
No. of adolescents/adults (age 14 and older)	c. 116 individuals (50%), based on Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981:chart 6)	35 individuals (43%), based on Rollefson et al. (1992:table 8)
No. of complete adolescent/adult skeletons	c. 32 individuals (c. 28%) ²	c. 12 individuals (c. 35%), usually recovered from trash deposits, based on Rollefson et al. (1992:461)
No. of adolescent/adult skeletons with cranial removal	c. 84 individuals (c. 72%) ³	c. 23 individuals (c. 65%), based on Rollefson et al. (1992:461)
Single cranium burials	16, based on Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981:433) ⁴	c. 5; final report not yet published, preliminary reports list fewer than five
Cached crania burials	47, based on Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981:436) less those from PPNA contexts ⁵	c. 5, based on Rollefson (1987) and Rollefson et al. (1992)
No. of adolescent/adult skeletons for which crania cannot be accounted	c. 21	c. 13

¹ Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981) record 212 skeletons from the MPPNB occupation. On the basis of the argument that the skull caches are from MPPNB levels this figure is increased to 232.

² The total estimated number of complete skeletons from MPPNB (106), multiplied by the percentage of adolescent and adult skeletons recovered from MPPNB deposits (31%).

³ This is difficult to calculate as a result of the poor recording of Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981). Assuming that cranial removal was not practiced on MPPNB infants, as observed by Rollefson et al. (1992:463), then the total number of adolescents/adults with cranial removal recorded by Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981) for the PPNA and MPPNB levels at Jericho (167) can be divided by two to calculate this figure.

⁴ The total number of crania recovered from single secondary mortuary burials from the PPNA and MPPNB, divided by two.

⁵ While Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981) list 52 crania recovered in caches, only 30 are listed in their final report. I assume that 52 was the correct number of crania recovered from caches.

Table 7.3. Distribution of primary and secondary mortuary treatments of adolescents/adults from MPPNB period Jericho and 'Ain Ghazal for a hypothetical population of 100 adolescent/adult individuals*

Type of mortuary practice	Estimated no. and percentage of MPPNB youth/adult skeletal population			
	Jericho		'Ain Ghazal	
Primary mortuary interment, but no secondary mortuary ritual with skull removal (complete adolescent/adult skeletons)		28 (28%)		34 (34%)
Both primary and secondary mortuary events, with cranial removal		72 (72%)		66 (66%)
Crania interred in collective groups	40 (56%)		14 (21%)	
Crania interred in single burials	14 (19%)		14 (21%)	
Location of crania unknown (possible large communal cache?)	18 (25%)		38 (56%)	
		100 skeletons (100%)		100 skeletons (100%)

*Based on data presented in Rollefson et al. (1992) and Kurth and Röhrer-Ertl (1981).

over the long term was manifested through the close similarities in the types of ritual behavior practiced, a similarity in the locations in which rituals were practiced, and the reiteration of mortuary and dedicatory themes expressed in other regional areas. In discussing the nature of Neolithic social configurations recent studies have focused new attention upon the role of internal social factors, such as the role of individual human agency in the long-term maintenance of social practices, to better understand transitions in social organization within early agricultural communities (Byrd 1994; Köhler-Rollefson and Rollefson 1990; Kuijt 1995, 2000a; Rollefson and Köhler-Rollefson 1989; Verhoeven 1999). Much of our understanding of the importance of a corporate and individual identity comes from ethnographic studies of secondary mortuary systems, which were widely practiced in MPPNB communities.

Following several ethnographic studies (Hertz 1960; Kan 1989; Schiller 1997), I envision secondary mortuary practices in MPPNB communities as reflecting two interrelated, yet clearly distinct, social dimensions: (1) the recognition of the individuality of the deceased and (2) the idealization of links between the living, the deceased, and the collective ancestors. While recognizing that variation is likely to exist within communities and through different regions, I believe that from an overall perspective the acts of homogeneous grave preparation, the burial of individual dead, and the absence of mortuary goods can be best interpreted as reflecting a means of controlling/limiting displays of identity, privilege, or wealth within these communities. In the context of their widespread use in the southern Levant, secondary mortuary practices probably served as community events in which memories of collective and individual ancestries were actively negotiated and defined. I suggest, moreover, that the power of these practices physically and symbolically centered on the creation of social memory through the actions of ritual practitioners, which occurred in specific locations in these villages and employed imagery understood by members of the community.

Memory and Place

Recent explorations of MPPNB architectural and mortuary practices illustrate some of the complex physical and symbolic interweaving between biological death, social death, and the creation of social memory in specific spatial locations (e.g., Banning and Byrd 1987, 1989; Byrd 1994; Kuijt 1996; Rollefson 1997, 2000) (Figure 7.3). Elsewhere I have argued (Kuijt 1995) that MPPNB House members symbolically and physically

formalized the design and long-term maintenance of residential and nonresidential structures within their communities. Architecture was continually linked to mortuary practices through the placement of burials inside of residential structures, highlighting elements of continuity and standardization in the design of residential and nonresidential structures over multiple generations, and anchoring architecture to the social landscape as a geographical focus of ritual action (Figures 7.4 and 7.5). Space and mortuary practices were two parts of a strategic material language emphasizing affinity and kinship within and between different houses and, ultimately, a shared social memory within the community.

In the case of the MPPNB specific mortuary data appear to reflect the connections between the living and the ancestors, life and death, and the physical action of moving human remains through the necessary stages of mortuary rituals. Within these communities, mortuary practices were tightly focused on residential sites in general, and residential structures in specific. The deceased were generally interred in prepared subfloor pit features in residences, with the floors then replastered (Figures 7.3, 7.5, and 7.6). At 'Ain Ghazal it appears that the location of a cranium below the floor was then marked in some way, such as red paint on the white plaster floor. In most cases, at some later point after defleshing had occurred, household members returned to the grave, opened the area around the cranium, removed the cranium, and then recovered/replastered the grave (Figure 7.3). In a limited number of instances, the cranium was then covered with multiple coats of plaster, painted, inset with shells, and presumably employed in various ritual contexts before being cached individually or in a group in one of several extramural and intermural locations within the site. In this context, then, the creation of social memory is tightly linked to specific spatial locations within communities, locations that were recorded, maintained, sanctified, and, in all likelihood, identified as being linked to known individuals from the community.

Beyond the creation of ritual space with individual burials, there are some strong indications that MPPNB burial practices, and more specifically skull caching, focused on large community-level collective caches. On the basis of the under-representation of human skulls from mortuary contexts at 'Ain Ghazal and Jericho, as well as the excavation of a large nonresidential structure at Çayönü containing over four hundred skulls and other human materials, I believe it is possible that MPPNB community members buried the skulls of some individuals in some form of collective community cache located within settlements (Kuijt 1995) (Tables 7.2 and 7.3).

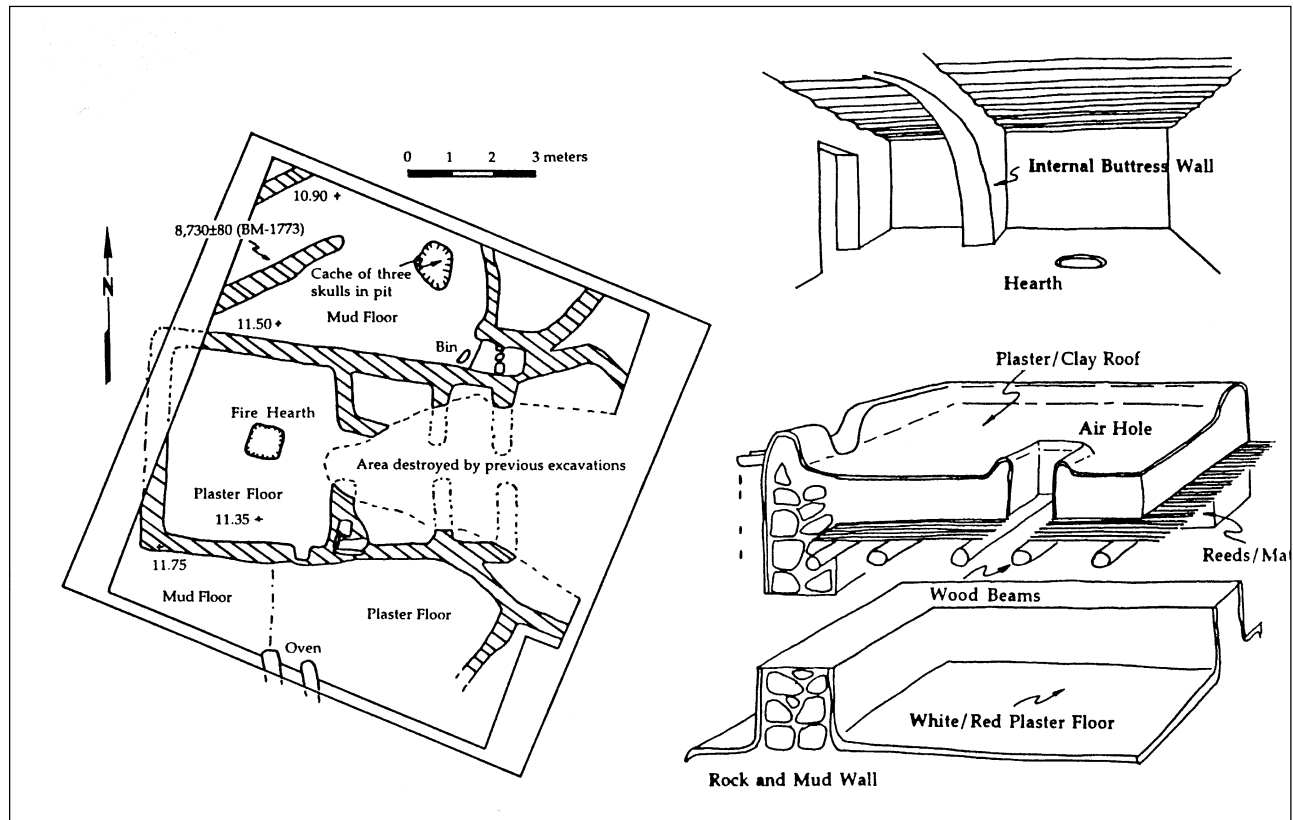
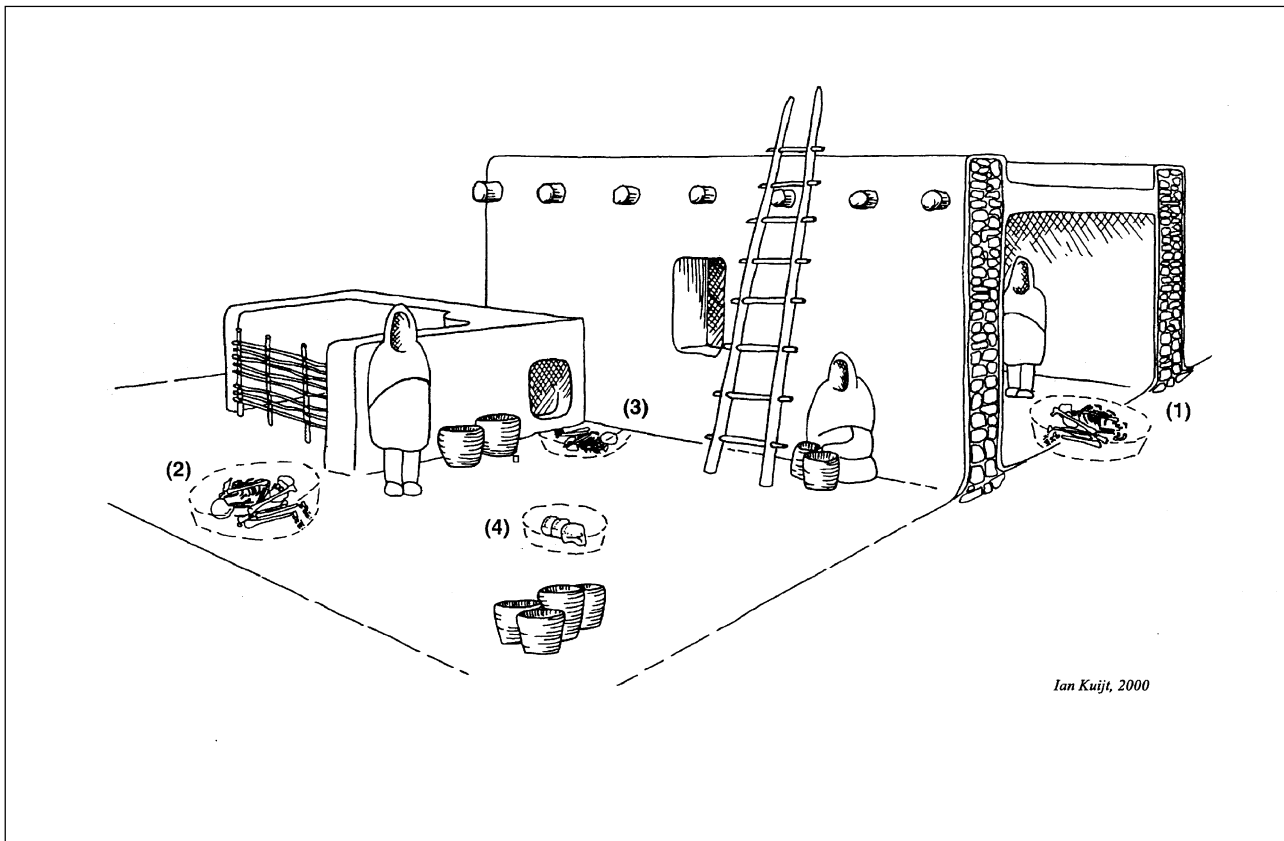


Figure 7.5. Left, Plan view of MPPNB period residential structure and skull cache dating to approximately 9,780–9,600 B.P. (based on radiocarbon sample BM-1773, 1 sigma). Note extramural location of skull cache. Right, Interpretive reconstruction of interior of MPPNB (c. 10,500–9,500 B.P.) residential structure (top), and cutaway view of hypothesized construction methods for wall, floor, and roof (bottom).

Presumably such caches would have served as a physical focus for community rituals, controlled by ritual practitioners, and, by extension, would have symbolized the real or fictive interconnections of households and individuals within the community. This was probably accomplished by reference to a broader group of ancestors interred in the same way, without material means of identifying distinct individuals or links to different households, and the creation of “ritual furniture.” Not only would the location and purpose of such a collective community cache have been understood within the community, but also it would have served as a physical and symbolic locus of meaning. People’s social memory and identity in MPPNB communities, therefore, were interconnected with space, be it collective public space or the more restricted physical context of households burials. In these communities social memory was, at least in part, defined, maintained, and linked to the spatial location of ritual action.

Ritual Furniture and Nonresidential Architecture. Recent regional synthesis and ongoing field research at

select settlements have provided enticing glimpses of how and where MPPNB Houses practiced community-focused rituals within settlements (e.g., Byrd 1994, 2000; Kuijt 1995; Rollefson 1997, 1998; Rollefson et al. 1992). On the basis of the presence of very large, centrally located raised, rimmed hearths, larger than those in residential structures, and the absence of *in situ* artifacts associated with domestic activities, Byrd (1994) argues that select buildings in the MPPNB occupation at Beidha were probably employed for communal and ritual practices. In contrast to residential structures, most of these buildings were constructed with unique architectural features. For example, Building 9, which directly underlies Building 8, included a unique stone-lined pit, a red strip painted along the lower portion of the interior wall and edge of the plaster floor, an immense oval monolith, and a shallow stone basin. In many cases at Beidha, the builders maintained these particular features through successive phases of occupation; in the case of Buildings 8 and 9 the maintenance and reuse of the buildings and features endured for at least two hundred years. Interestingly,



Ian Kuijt, 2000

Figure 7.6. Schematic representation of Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period mortuary practices based upon architectural data illustrated in Figure 7.4. Illustrated ritual and mortuary practices include (1) primary adult burial, skull removed, subfloor and inside of structure; (2) primary adult burial, complete, extramural; (3) primary child burial, complete, under wall of structure; (4) secondary burial cache of three skulls.

these nonresidential structures were constructed both within and outside of the boundaries of the settlement. Kirkbride's excavation some forty meters away from the residential area of the site revealed three stone structures that were distinctive from residential structures in construction and character with upright stone slab walls, a huge 3.0 by 2.2 meter stone-slab basin and a very large raised stone-slab platform, and a large rectangular stone monolithic in one building (Byrd 1994:657). Both the location and contents of these structures suggest that community members constructed these for ritual practices, perhaps with different Houses associated with different structures.

Excavations at Beidha, Kfar HaHoresh, 'Ain Ghazal, and Jericho also indicate that one focus of MPPNB House or community-wide ritual involved the physical and symbolic use of orthostats in these nonresidential structures (Goring-Morris 2000; Rollefson 2000). Despite the limited horizontal excavations of MPPNB occupations at Jericho, Kenyon's (1957, 1981) excavations in Squares EI, II, and V (Phase XIV, Stage Ixi) uncovered a series

of structures built successively and directly on top of each other (Figure 7.7, A and B). Although this is only partially exposed in excavation, in one of the last rebuilding phases the builders placed a dedicatory burial of an infant at the corner of wall E200 and E205, and enclosed a small 2.5 by 1.5 meter room that included a small niche with a stone pillar base. A large chipped stone orthostat was recovered on the floor of this room in front of the niche, and Kenyon's interpretation places this stone as originally standing in the niche. Interestingly, the small wall niches documented at most settlements appear in both residential and nonresidential structures, and this architectural feature may indicate that some aspects of broader community ritual or beliefs were practiced within households, as well as communally in these nonresidential structures. At 'Ain Ghazal, we see further evidence for this employment of stone orthostats as a form of ritual furniture. In the excavation of MPPNB rooms in the 1996 field season, researchers uncovered a unique room with internal, stone-lined fire hearths, upright stone platforms, and three orthostats (Rollefson 1997, 1998, 2000).

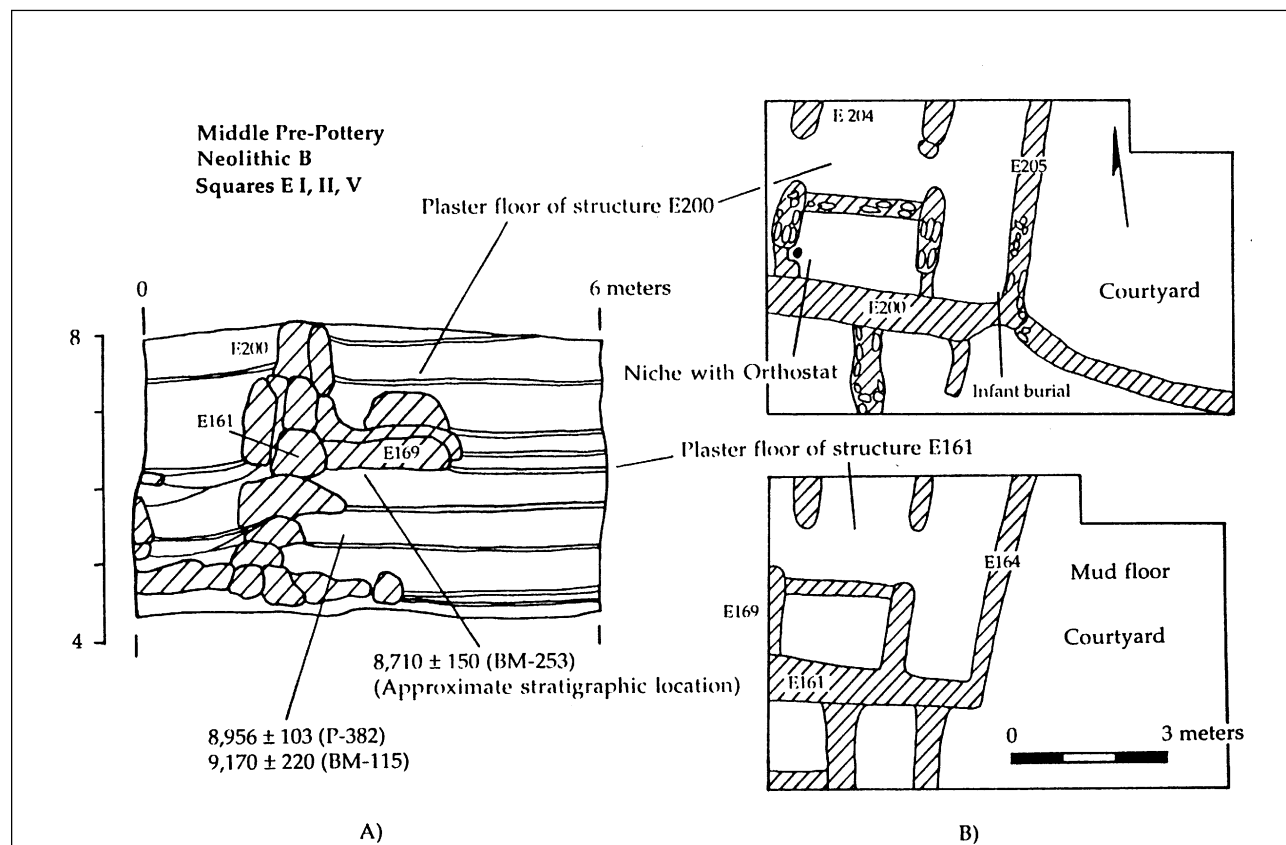


Figure 7.7. A, West wall profile, Squares EI, II, and V, Jericho. B, Plan view of MPPNB structures E200 and E161, Squares EI, II, and V, Jericho. Note standardization in the location and design of MPPNB structures through periods of rebuilding and use, the placement of infant burial in the corner of structure E200, and the location of the niche with orthostat.

Comparison of the location of orthostat features and the construction of niches at Jericho, Beidha, Ghwair I, and 'Ain Ghazal indicates that MPPNB communities practiced ritual within individual household residential units as well as in larger nonresidential structures in which House-based rituals were practiced (Figure 7.4). This, in turn, informs us as to some of the ways in which affinity was crafted and maintained within individual Houses and across the entire community. At Beidha, Kirkbride (1968) and Byrd (1994) both argue that non-residential structures served as a physical focus of ritual and community practices, an interpretation that is shared by Rollefson (1997, 1998, 2000) for the nonresidential architecture at 'Ain Ghazal. While recognizing the variation in construction techniques, and the placement and numeric ordering of orthostats and votive offerings at these sites, I argue that all of these cases display the deliberate delineation and construction of ritual space by individual Houses to both consolidate membership within their House as well as reiterate aspects of shared membership at the House and community level. Previous research on the development of Pre-Pottery

Neolithic mortuary practices illustrates that House and community ritual and mortuary practices were based upon the symbolic and physical reiteration of common themes, including ancestor worship (Bienert 1991; Garfinkel 1994; Kuijt 1996). Furthermore, I believe that the organization of skull, figurine, and votive caches in groups of three physically illustrates how community members thematically linked different practices so as to emphasize House and community affinity (Kuijt 1996, 2000b). Expanding this argument, I believe that available architectural evidence from Beidha and 'Ain Ghazal demonstrates that in some cases the internal organization and construction of non-ritual structures was also set up in groups of three, as exhibited by the recovery of three orthostats inside a nonresidential structure at 'Ain Ghazal and the construction of three nonresidential structures outside of the community at Beidha.

Scale, Continuity, and Change in the Neolithic House. One of the significant contributions to our understanding of House societies has been the realization that the House, be it defined as a physical structure or a social unit, or both, is founded on temporal continuity

and stability albeit within the framework of dynamic social change (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995; McKinnon 1991; Waterson 1995). In a refreshing approach to MPPNB architecture, Banning and Byrd have explored how changes in the physical form of structures were linked to a process of renovation and the life cycle of individual households (Banning and Byrd 1987, 1989; Byrd and Banning 1988). In these studies Banning and Byrd clearly document that MPPNB residential architecture was remodeled many times, a pattern often echoed by studies of ethnographic households (e.g., McKinnon 1991). A critical element in the MPPNB reuse and remodeling of houses is the decision to rely upon the original design and to maintain some or most of the original structure (Figure 7.7, A and B). Even when old structures were abandoned, the new structure was frequently built directly over top of the original and with the same orientation and internal design. MPPNB villagers actively maintained their house structures for long periods, in some cases over several hundred years, by remodeling of both abandoned and actively used structures.

Researchers have uncovered a striking temporal depth in the continuity of the organization, shape, and size of MPPNB structures at many different settlements. For example, Banning and Byrd (1989:526–29) note that in Houses 4 and 8 at ‘Ain Ghazal, there was an overall reduction in the size of the structures through time, but the *overall design* and *physical location* of these structures were maintained over at least two hundred years. Interestingly, there is some evidence to suggest that the overall reduction in the size and/or compartmentalization was part of a regional pattern noted across the entire Levantine region (Kuijt 2000b). It is also interesting that in the case of House 4, this renovation involved the “unusual and laborious practice of removing the entire house floor” (Banning and Byrd 1989:527), rather than simply filling it and building a new house in a different location.

Deep excavation at several MPPNB settlements, such as Jericho, ‘Ain Ghazal, and Beidha, illustrate that even after abandonment, new structures were intentionally rebuilt in the same location over several hundred years. For example, in Kenyon’s excavations at Jericho in Squares EI, II, and V, she uncovered a series of at least six residential buildings that had been constructed directly over each other, with the same orientation and internal organization over a period of at least two hundred years (Figure 7.7, B). Similar observations were made by Kirkbride (1968:94) in her excavation of large non-residential structures 8 and 9 at Beidha for which she

noted: “Other important features were also outlined in red; a large roughly square and highly polished stone seat or table situated against the wall just inside the door, and a circular stone-lined pit at the base of which was a large stone. The presence of similar large stones in the same relative position in the earlier editions of this house shows the pit and the stone had some important function, religious or not, which cannot be determined. To this house were attached courtyards and beyond lay the rectangular houses, all identical in size and construction, laid out in rows.” In both of these cases, as well as in the work by Banning and Byrd, it is clear that the size and organization of many MPPNB structures were, for all intents and purposes, actively maintained by their occupants through multiple generations. In the case of the residential structures, one has to wonder whether this patterning reflects dimensions of House ownership and inheritance through time, a subject that has yet to be explored in the Neolithic literature. If nothing else, these observations illustrate that the individual houses in MPPNB settlements were combined with a degree of importance linked to the overall stability of the house as a physical form across multiple generations and a means by which long-term collective memory was developed and maintained in conjunction with mortuary practices.

In sum, in MPPNB communities architecture was continually linked to mortuary practices through the placement of burials inside of residential structures, highlighting elements of continuity and standardization in the design of residential and nonresidential structures over multiple generations, and anchoring the architecture to the social landscape as a geographical focus of ritual action. In this context space and mortuary practices were two parts of a strategic material language emphasizing affinity and kinship within and between different houses and, ultimately, a shared social memory within the community.

Images and Memory

As with *memory and place*, *images and memory* appear to have been tightly connected in MPPNB communities. Viewed collectively, several MPPNB settlements provide tangible evidence of human actions by which ritual practitioners, household members related to the deceased, and community members facilitated the physical movement of the deceased through multiple stages of mortuary practices, and this was materially manifested through the use and organization of specific imagery and actions. In the context of a highly visible MPPNB material culture, this included the removal of skulls as part of

secondary mortuary events, the occasional plastering and painting of human skulls after removal; the creation of stone masks designed to fit over skulls; the development and use of large anthropomorphic statuary; and the organization of these according to prescribed numerical systems (for detailed consideration see Cauvin 1994; Garfinkel 1994; Goring-Morris 2000, Kuijt 2000b; Rollefson 1997, 2000). These practices illustrate the clear public aspect to mortuary practices in these communities, and that they were organized in such a way that messages were understood within the community. For example, the large anthropomorphic statues recovered from 'Ain Ghazal were designed to be placed in an upright position on large stakes, perhaps in a public context. Similarly the depositional location of plastered human skulls in extramural contexts suggests that the final stage in their burial was public in nature. As outlined elsewhere (Kuijt 2000b), it appears that many of these anthropomorphic and zoomorphic cases were organized in groups of three. Collectively, these patterns reflect the deliberate organization of ritual practices in conjunction with clear social rules, and presumably for an extended group of people. I argue that it is likely that secondary skull removal, painting, and plastering practiced on the remains of important individuals within communities, perhaps of representative household members, served as a means by which the dead and the Neolithic skull-masks were recreated as "an anchor for meanings" in which the living were linked to the dead (Humphreys 1981). From the perspective of Hertz (1960), I suggest that Neolithic skull removal, caching in both public and private locations to commemorate the dead, and the use and construction of such ritual masks demonstrate a profound relationship between the living, the dead, and the built environment, and how these would have been employed to construct a collective and individual social memory.

As is articulated elsewhere (Kuijt 1995), I suggest that ritual practitioners were central to the construction of a collective and individual social memory, and that they probably were privileged as a result of the perceived importance of their work. For example, I think that MPPNB mortuary practices reflect highly standardized actions of ritual practitioners who selected a very small sample of human skulls for the creation of skull-masks from within the subset of cached skulls. In the case of Jericho fewer than seven percent of the individuals buried at the settlement had their skulls removed and plastered or painted. Although it is difficult to demonstrate archaeologically, I suspect that the deceased selected to become masks in death were potentially other ritual practitioners in life, a line of argument that is at least par-

tially supported by the observation that while cranial deformation is rare in MPPNB settlements, many of the skulls that were cached and/or plastered were deformed (Arensburg and Hershkovitz 1988).

On the basis of homogeneous residential architectural practices, the almost total absence of grave goods, and the burial of individuals without material expression of kin or household lines, I have previously argued that these ritual practitioners were drawn from households throughout the community, stressing dimensions of shared kinship and affinity. Regardless of how these individuals were selected from the community, such ritual practitioners must have served a central role within these communities, for through the use and construction of skulls as masks they facilitated contact with the ancestors in a way that must have been distinct from that of merely participating in primary and secondary mortuary rituals. As noted earlier, in most cases MPPNB skull plastering and painting focused on the creation of a naturalistic face, complete with eyes, nose, and mouth. It is, therefore, a process of recreating the physical structure that embodies both the living and the dead, one that transcends different realms through the application of plaster, clay, and paint. It is also clear that community or household members often replastered the removed skulls several times, applying multiple layers of plaster and paint (Hershkovitz et al. 1995; Hershkovitz et al. 1996). In this context, then, such skulls served as dynamic ritual objects probably used for many years if not generations. Knowledge and control of the creation of such skulls by ritual practitioners, as well as the use of a deceased individual ancestor to contact or relate to a broader collection of ancestors, would have been very powerful, and probably served as a claim to authority within these communities on many levels. A ritual practitioner's heightened status may have been based on his/her knowledge of the technology to create these skulls, and the ritual knowledge permitting the use of skulls in ritual practices, establishing the timing of ritual events, guiding the content of ritual ceremonies, and mediating the relationship of the living community with the ancestors. Thus, in light of the strong degree to which community and household ideology, beliefs, and values are interconnected with mortuary ritual in ethnographic studies (e.g., Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997), it seems reasonable to assume that governance within MPPNB communities would have been closely connected to the act and practice of ritual beliefs, the creation of individual and community social memory in general, and the creation and use of masks to mediate the ties between the living and the ancestors in specific.

Viewed collectively, this highlights how ritual practitioners and household members were linked to their ancestors through the use and organization of specific imagery and actions conducted in specific areas of the community. In this context, then, the ordering and transmission of social memory was linked to, and interwoven with, *images* and *place*.

Discussion

Echoing several ethnographic works (Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997) in this chapter I have explored how death in Neolithic societies was one of the critical opportunities, if not the major opportunity, to define and reiterate the social order within communities and craft individual and community social memories. Drawing upon available MPPNB mortuary and architectural data, I argue that mortuary practices can be envisioned as a series of complex, and interlinked, behaviors and outline the importance and complexity of community-focused social identities as actively created in the multiple stages of life and death. In trying to understand these social identities I have focused on the interweavings of *images and memory* and *memory and place* within MPPNB communities. Attempting to move beyond the view of plastered MPPNB skulls as artifacts, I have explored how Neolithic skull removal and the preparation and use of plastered and painted skulls may have been applied in ritual practice, conducted by ritual practitioners, and served as highly visual anchors of meaning and the construction of social memory. Neolithic skull removal existed as an important social focus within which the identity of the living as well as that of the deceased was subsumed within the collective identity of the dead. The plastering and extensive reuse and replastering of these skulls highlights the dynamic and long-term role of these objects. It is also important to note that the final deposition of these objects was spatially focused on residential areas, both in interior areas of structures, as dedicatory caches, and in exterior areas that would have been accessed by many people. While we have only limited evidence for the predepositional use-life of removed skulls and the rituals associated with them, it has been argued (e.g., Goring-Morris 2000; Kuijt 2000b; Rollefson 2000) that this at least partially focused on interior areas of residential structures. In this context, then, the social identity and use of space of the living were intertwined with those of the deceased, and made intelligible and meaningful through the action of powerful mortuary ritual (Figure 7.4). It is through community and household ritual that

shared collective memories are created, entrenched, and transmitted. As one aspect of this point, I believe that this awareness requires us to consider how mortuary practices in general, and the use of space in specific, were intensely interwoven within communities in different cultural contexts. Although focused on a different cultural context, in discussing this relationship Basso (1996:57) outlines that the ideology of the built environment is culturally defined through myth, dance, and, in some cases, recurrent forms of religious and political rituals. In the context of MPPNB communities, collective social memory and meaning were anchored, at least partially, in culturally mediated images of where and how they dwell. The importance and power of mortuary rituals and place, then, rest in the shared meanings, sentiments, and process of sanctification.

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Notes

1. Unless noted otherwise, the discussion of chronology in this chapter is based on calibrated radiocarbon years before present (B.P.). Although systems differ as to the exact timing and terminology, the Levantine Aceramic Neolithic is generally subdivided into the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A period (c. 11,600–10,500 calendar years before present) and the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period (c. 10,500–8,500 B.P.). For the purposes of this essay the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period is further divided into three periods consisting of (1) Middle (10,500–9,500 B.P.); (2) Late (9,500–8,800 B.P.); and (3) Final/Pre-Pottery Neolithic C (8,800–8,500 B.P.).

2. Drawing upon archaeological data from MPPNB settlements, such as storage and food preparation features, I employ the term *residential structure* to identify the physical buildings around and within which social and economic behaviors were focused in the past. The term *households* refers to the

social and economic unit that occupied individual, or multiple, residential structures as part of a social and economic unit. In the context of this essay, I employ the term *House* to identify an individual household that existed as a corporate body that perpetuated itself through the transmission of its name, goods, and wealth, both material and immaterial.

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Embodied Memories of Place and People: Death and Society in an Early Urban Community

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Relationships to places may also find expression through the agencies of myth, prayer, music, dance, art, architecture, and in many communities, recurrent forms of religious and political rituals. Thus...places and their meanings are continually woven into the fabric of social life, anchoring it to features of the landscape and blanketing it with layers of significance that few can fail to appreciate. (Basso 1996:57)

Basso's quote so simply and so powerfully reminds us of the gathering power of place, and the wondrous tapestry woven with human desires, identities, emotions, and actions in certain places, that I find it useful in thinking about and crafting reconstructions of mortuary practices in the archaeological past. Throughout the history of anthropology, many ethnographers and archaeologists have nurtured a keen appreciation for the production and nurturing of memories of places, places we travel to and from, places where we grow up, places where we work in the field, and places we call home. For many of us, places evoke powerful memories of experiences, desires, expectations, and emotions. Places can gather these memories and embody specific chapters in our own personal biographies (Casey 1996:24).

Reconstructing a sense of place is an integral part of archaeological practice, regardless of whether we are studying mortuary behavior or other aspects of peoples' lives. For example, we often reconstruct landscapes from settlement pattern studies, or draft architectural plans from buildings or neighborhoods that we have excavated. But we do not always make the connection so eloquently stated by Basso: places are inextricably linked with people, and peoples' lives are intimately related to places. As archaeologists, our challenge then is to transfer the material remains of the past into anthropological stories of places. In crafting our vision of the past, we have the chance to people the past with individuals in places; places that gather their memories, languages, personal histories, emotions, expectations, and desires; places woven into the social fabric of a past community.

Approaching mortuary practices from the perspective of the link between place, memories, and people, we seek to gain an understanding of the interplay between the dead and the living in conducting commemorative rites and reaffirming or rending the bonds among members of the living community (for example, see Chesson 1999; Gillespie 2001; Hollimon 1997, this volume; Joyce 1999, this volume; Kuijt 1996, this volume; Kus and Raharijaona this volume; McCafferty and McCafferty 1994; O'Shea 1996; Raharijaona and Kus this volume). In these analyses, researchers seek to infuse their interpretation and reconstruction of life in the past with a sense of the conflicting emotions, sensuality, tensions, and excitement that can be a part of commemorative ceremonies, all of which occurred in a specific time and place. In this way, they recreate a more complete and realistic vision of the past, interweaving the complexities of peoples' lives with the richness of place.

Commemorative ceremonies set into motion richly textured interactions in which individuals and groups can assert identities, craft social memories, and repair the social fabric of the community. For many archaeologists, past mortuary rites, which enact the complex interplay of material culture and identity, can be at least partially gleaned from the excavated material remains of these ceremonies: namely, the grave goods, skeletal remains, funerary structures, and the built environment (for example, O'Shea 1996). From an ethnographic perspective, mortuary rituals offer a sensuous arena in which people actively create and (re)assert social memories; renew, forge, or break social bonds; and make claims for individual identities and group memberships (George 1996;

Hertz 1960; Jing 1996; Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Schiller 1997, this volume; Weiner 1976). Both ethnographers and archaeologists have clearly illustrated that our understanding of past communities through their mortuary practices benefits by close attention to the intensely complex interplay between people's identities, experiences, and desires; the multiple webs of social structures; and the use of material culture and the built environment to construct social memories and identities of people and places in primary and secondary mortuary practices.

In this analysis of the pre-urban mortuary practices at the Early Bronze Age site of Bab edh-Dhra', Jordan, I explore how we can witness the creation of social memories of people and places in rituals of commemoration in the deep past. When we consider mortuary practices as arenas in which social memories are created, in which people present their understanding of the past and their expectations for the future, the tombs at Bab edh-Dhra' take on a more profound significance than simply being how pre-urban people in this region disposed of their dead. From this perspective, we can immediately begin to consider the place in which people buried their friends, kinspeople, and adversaries, as well as the people who conducted these rites for the dead, the dead being memorialized, and the people for whom these social memories were (re)produced (George 1996:186–200). Drawing on the richness of the Bab edh-Dhra' data, gathered from extensive surveys and excavations, I will offer some ideas about how we might be able to answer some of these questions.

Burial Practices at Early Bronze Age IA Bab edh-Dhra'

Before launching into a discussion of mortuary practices in the Early Bronze Age (EBA), I believe it will be helpful to provide a brief introduction to the temporal context of the EBA and a short synopsis of the links between the settlement history of Bab edh-Dhra' and the mortuary practices.¹ The EBA in the southern Levant (ancient Israel, Jordan, and Palestine) represents the initial period of urbanization in the region, and several researchers have explored the complicated sequence of the establishment, growth, and eventual abandonment of walled towns (for instance, see Amiran and Gophna 1989; Ben-Tor 1992; de Miroschedji 1989; Esse 1989, 1991; Falconer and Savage 1995; Joffe 1991, 1993; Kempinski 1989; Rosen 1995). While a comprehensive discussion of these issues clearly lies beyond the scope of this study, the mortuary data from Bab edh-Dhra' shaft tombs and

charnel houses can offer an interesting perspective on the development and decline of an urban society in the third millennium B.C. As one of the only urban sites associated with a well-excavated and published cemetery, Bab edh-Dhra' offers the researcher an overabundance of data about life and death in an EBA urban town in the southern Levant (Figure 8.1).

For the EB IA period, the excavators have found no evidence of settlement at the site, located in the southern Ghor overlooking the Dead Sea. The nearest EB I sites occupy the adjacent Kerak Plateau, approximately fifteen to twenty kilometers up the Wadi Kerak (Steele 1990).² Steele (1990) has suggested that during this pre-urban, even pre-settlement, period, people from the Kerak Plateau traveled to Bab edh-Dhra' in the Ghor and buried their dead in chambers associated with shafts excavated into the ground (Schaub and Rast 1989; Rast, personal communication, 1998) (Figure 8.2, Table 8.1). In the period of urbanization (EB IB and early EB II) when people began settling at the site, the inhabitants utilized both shaft tombs as well as small, circular charnel houses, and placed the disarticulated and articulated skeletal remains of their dead within these transitional mortuary contexts. In the EB II-III period, the population of the site had grown and inhabitants constructed thick fortification walls around the town, which at its largest reached four hectares. Bab edh-Dhra' "urbanites" buried their dead in charnel houses: they stored the disarticulated remains of individuals in large, rectilinear, mudbrick charnel houses, located south of the settlement in the same cemetery in which the earlier shaft tombs were located (Chesson 1999). In the EB IV phase, people continued to live at the site, even constructing houses on top of the decaying fortification walls (Rast and Schaub 1981:31–34), but the settlement is no longer considered to be urban, and most of the population had dispersed throughout the countryside. Nevertheless, two shaft tombs from this period have been excavated; once again, we see that with the shift in settlement pattern, mortuary practices also changed. The EB IV inhabitants of Bab edh-Dhra' buried their dead in shaft tombs with stone-lined shafts (Schaub and Rast 1989:473–89, fig. 277).

This chapter will focus on the EB IA shaft tombs of the pre-urban period to gain insights into the foundations for the development of social differentiation and urbanization in the region. I believe that the EB IA people were creating, negotiating, and reproducing social memories at the site of Bab edh-Dhra', and that these memories and indeed the place of commemoration helped to create a social and physical framework for later urban lifeways. In particular, I argue that examination of the

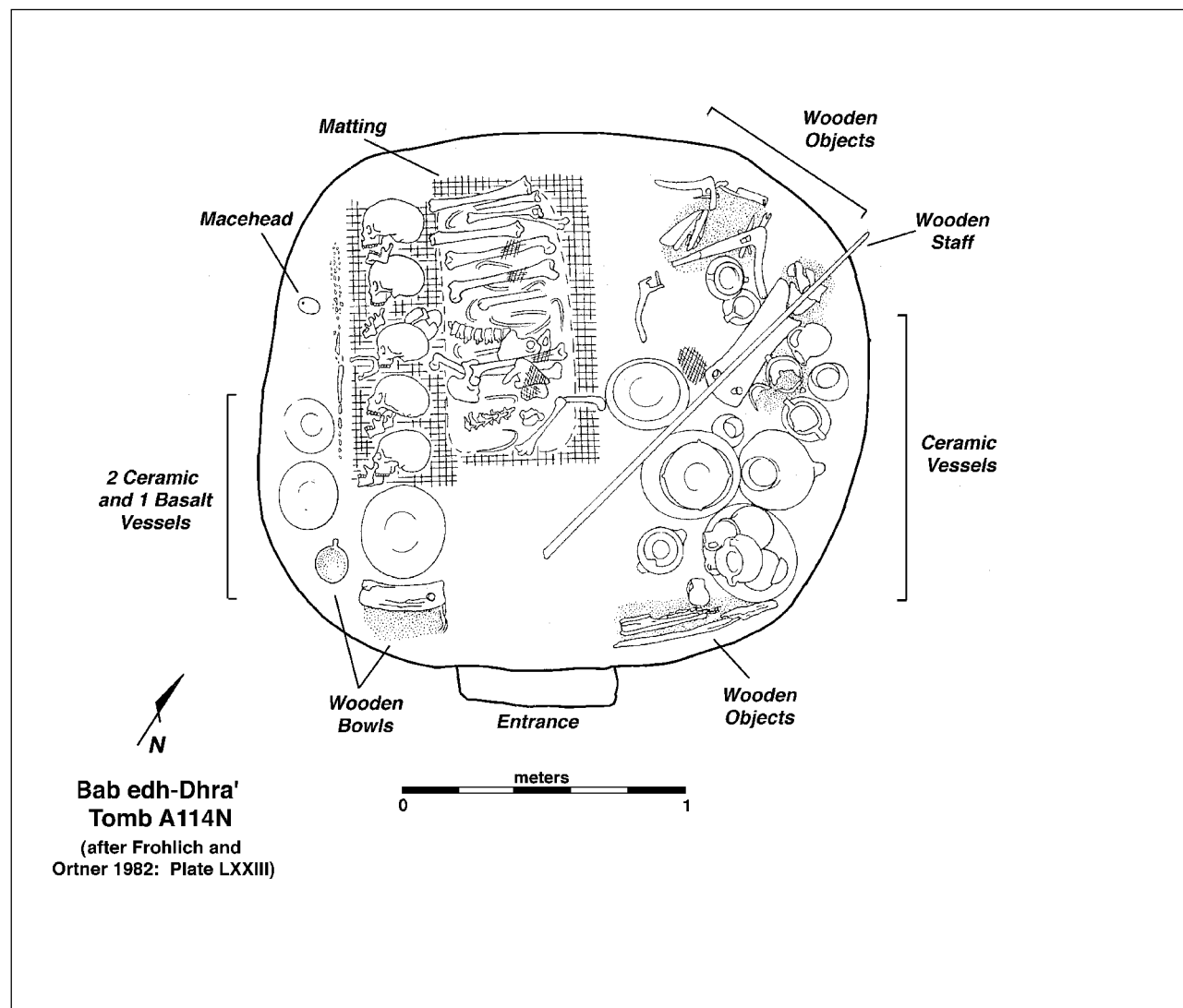


Figure 8.2. Plan of shaft tomb A114N, Bab edh-Dhra'.

mortuary practices, including the creation of a physical place for burial, the treatment of the dead in secondary mortuary rites, the inclusion of certain types of grave goods, and the communal burial of the dead, provides us with an insight into the social structures of the pre-urban period.

Stories of Mortuary Practices and Commemoration at Bab edh-Dhra'

In analyzing the mortuary practices of EB IA Bab edh-Dhra', it is helpful to bring to mind the different behavioral elements of the rites suggested by the material remains. Such a reconstruction will involve both the normative, scientific description of the material remains, as well as the more imaginative narrative implicating the actual people participating in these ceremonies (cf. Joyce

this volume; Kuijt this volume; Meskell this volume). Combining these two genres of writing produces a richer picture of the past and acknowledges the crucial role people play in creating the archaeological record.

Despite extensive survey and excavation in and around the site of Bab edh-Dhra', the excavators have uncovered no evidence of settlement at the site during the pre-urban EB IA period (Schaub and Rast 1989). The only archaeological remains from the EB IA period comprise mortuary remains: shaft tombs with anywhere from one to five chambers, each filled with the disarticulated remains of one to five individuals, associated with grave goods, including pottery vessels, stone vessels, clay figurines, wooden objects, beads of various materials, and stone (Figure 8.2). In these EB IA secondary burials at the cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra', the living followed a

Table 8.1. General Characteristics of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices at Bab edh-Dhra'

	Nature of Occupation	Fundamental Social Unit	Mortuary Structure	Range of MNI	
EB IA (3150–3050 B.C.)	No evidence for sedentary occupation at the site	Household Unit	Shaft tombs with one or more chambers (Figure 8.2)	Generally 4–5 individuals per chamber	
Late EB IA	No evidence for sedentary occupation at the site	Household Unit	Single chambers of IA shaft tombs	5–10 individuals per chamber	
EB IB (3050–2950 B.C.)	First evidence for architectural structures, sedentary occupation at the site	Household Unit	Shaft tombs with single chambers, shallow pit graves, circular charnel house (G1)	1–15 individuals	
Early EB II	Growing sedentary occupation at the site	Household Unit	Circular charnel houses of mudbrick with stone-lined doorways (Rast and Schaub 1981:fig. 18)	9–15 individuals	
EB II–III (2950–2300 B.C.)	Walled, urban settlement at the site	Household Unit and House/Lineage	Rectilinear charnel houses	41–200 individuals	
EB IV (2300–2150 B.C.)	Sedentary, non-urban occupation at site after hiatus at end of EB III	Household Unit	Shaft tombs with stone-lined shafts (exception is D1, simple shaft tomb) (Schaub and Rast 1989:figs. 277, 280)	4–7 individuals	

Sources: Bentley 1987, 1991; Frohlich and Ortner 1982; Rast 1999; Rast and Schaub 1974, 1978, 1980, 1981; Schaub 1981; Schaub and Rast 1984, 1989.

specific set of rules in which the bodily remains of individuals were separated and placed in discrete piles with skeletal materials of the previously interred. With few exceptions, the space in each chamber was discretely segmented to hold particular skeletal and grave goods. Skulls were placed to the left of the entrance, often in a line along the edge of a woven mat. On this mat, the living deposited the majority of post-cranial remains, particularly long bones, pelvic bones, ribs, and vertebrae. Finally, to the right of the mat and long bones, and to the right of the chamber entrance, people set the grave goods.

All of the EB IA shaft tombs contain the remains of individuals who were buried in secondary mortuary rituals, and the excavators have found no evidence for primary burials, namely articulated skeletons, in EB IA tombs. From this perspective, it seems that Bab edh-Dhra' represents a focus for secondary mortuary rituals in the EB IA. As of now, there is no clear evidence of where EB IA people conducted primary burial of their dead. It is possible that they buried the recently deceased at Bab edh-Dhra', and that archae-

ologists have not located these burials. Because of the intense survey and excavation of the site of Bab edh-Dhra', however, this option is an unlikely one. A more plausible explanation relies on the primary burial of individuals in another location, perhaps closer to the settlement of the EB IA people who traveled to Bab edh-Dhra' for secondary mortuary rites. Additional excavation and survey, particularly on the Kerak Plateau at the EB I sites, may address this gap in our understanding of the EB I sequence of mortuary rituals.

While we cannot say with certainty where the living communities were located, we do have some information on the social organization of the groups. In Bentley's (1987, 1991) analysis of dental characteristics of the EB IA skeletons from Bab edh-Dhra', she argues that individuals found within a single shaft tomb complex were more related to each other than to people buried in other shaft tombs. On the basis of this bioarchaeological research, she persuasively argues that the people buried in a single shaft tomb belonged to a particular kin group, because they show dental traits shared within a genetically related group

	Range of Structure Size	Nature of Burial Practice	Material Culture in Tombs	Number of Tombs
	1–5 chambers per shaft, chambers range from 1.4–3.85 m ²	Secondary burials: skull and postcranial elements separated into distinct piles	Pottery and stone vessels, costume items (beads, pendants, shells, bracelets), clay human figurines, matting, wooden vessels and objects, bone objects, maceheads, textiles	57 shaft tombs (104 chambers)
	Chambers range from 2.4–3.0 m ²	Primary and secondary burials; articulated skeletons, piles of skulls and bones mixed	Pottery vessels, costume items (pins, beads), stone vessels, macehead (1 in A111N)	2 shaft tombs (3 chambers)
	Single shaft tomb chambers range from 3.6–7.0 m ² ; charnel houses range from 3.6–33.2 m ²	Primary and secondary burials with articulated individuals, piles of skulls and bones mixed	Pottery vessels, costume items (pins, beads), bone objects, maceheads (2 in A88L)	5 shaft tombs, 1 shallow pit grave, and 2 circular charnel houses
	Charnel houses range from 3.6–4.2 m ²	Primary and secondary burials with articulated individuals, skull piles, bone piles	Pottery and stone vessels, costume items (beads, shells, bracelets)	3 tombs
	Charnel houses range from 13.4–120.9 m ²	Secondary burials of cremated remains of individuals; some primary burials from final stage of use found	Local and nonlocal pottery vessels, stone vessels, wood vessels, costume items (beads, pendants, shells, bracelets), metal weapons, maceheads, stone palettes, textiles, wooden objects	10 charnel houses
	Single shaft tomb chambers range from 3.5–5.6 m ²	Secondary and primary burials; some skulls removed in articulated burials	Pottery vessels, costume items (beads, pendants)	3 tombs

of individuals. People, probably family groups, traveled to the site of Bab edh-Dhra' to rebury their dead kinspeople, building mortuary structures and social memories in this site overlooking the Dead Sea.

With this framework as a starting point, we can now begin to consider more humanistic elements to the story, highlighting the intimate links between people, places, identity, and memory. Without evidence for settlement in the southeastern Dead Sea Plain during the EB IA, we can postulate that the people gathered the defleshed remains of the dead from their primary burial site, bundled up the remains carefully, and traveled to the site of Bab edh-Dhra' to bury the dead once again. Several individuals, likely belonging to the kin group of the deceased (Bentley 1987, 1991), traveled by foot or possibly donkey (Grigson 1995) to the site of Bab edh-Dhra', on the southeastern plain of the Dead Sea. Perhaps the remains of the dead were bundled onto the backs of donkeys, accompanied by the grave goods of pottery, stone vessels, figurines, maceheads, and jewelry. Traveling from the Kerak Plateau down steep slopes

by seemingly endless switchback trails, these family members slowly descended more than a thousand meters to the Dead Sea Plain. Once they arrived at Bab edh-Dhra', these people located their family's tomb, reopened the previously excavated shaft of approximately two meters in depth, and excavated out a new burial chamber or simply opened a previously constructed chamber. Into this chamber, they placed the discrete skeletal elements of their dead kinsperson, carefully laying the skull along with the other skulls and the long bones on top of the mat with their ancestors' post-cranial remains (Figure 8.2).

Drawing on several ethnographic studies of commemoration, mortuary rituals, and social memory (including George 1996; Kan 1989; Schiller this volume; Weiner 1976), we can imagine that this burial rite included a ceremony to commemorate the dead and to communally acknowledge the group's grief and anguish over losing one of their kin. On the journey to bury their dead, members of the group may have adorned their bodies with their most beautiful jewelry and textiles; they may have prepared eloquent

speeches or songs for people to speak, sing, and hear. They carried with them the correct number of special pottery vessels, the prized stone vessels, clay figurines, beaded jewelry, and wooden tools to place within the chamber with their ancestors. They slowly lowered the bundled remains down the shaft to the waiting arms of the deceased's brother, sister, father, cousin, mother, or friend, who was waiting down in the shaft to place the bones and goods in the chamber. While they placed the skeletal elements in the chamber, the gathered crowd may have spoken, sung, danced, and made offerings to the ancestors, and to the most recent occupant of the chambers. Perhaps these rituals, gifts, the proper segmentation of their dead kinsperson, and their burial with their foremothers and forefathers would help the newly deceased to join the community of the ancestors. After the group completed the rites, they withdrew, traveling back to their community on the Kerak Plateau, perhaps lightened from the burden of a vow, of mourning, or of anticipation of the ceremonies and various performances. As they journeyed from the burial site, the landscape around them, especially the high hills leading to the plateaus surrounding the valley and the vast salt lake, reflected the heaviness of the ceremony they just performed, the burden from which they were relieved, and a renewed sense of the memory of the ancestors.

Material Culture, Commemorative Place, and Social Memory

Commemoration obliges us to consider both its subjects and its objects, the commemorating and the commemorated. Commemoration cannot be disassociated from the sociality of remembering, nor can it be disassociated from the events that it recollects or reenacts. (George 1996:197)

From these two types of narrative reconstructions of the secondary mortuary practices at Bab edh-Dhra', there are several elements that I find particularly significant for this discussion:

- As we have found no evidence for settlement at the site, people traveled to Bab edh-Dhra' to bury their dead in secondary mortuary ceremonies;
- People placed their dead in collective tombs, and analysis of these tombs by Bentley (1987, 1991) suggests that those buried within a shaft tomb are genetically related;
- Grave goods within these tombs suggest the use of material culture to assert a particular identity through

adornment (George 1996:144–45, especially his citations of Simmel 1950; Hollimon this volume; Joyce 1999, this volume; Kuijt this volume; O'Shea 1996; Wiessner 1983); and

- In these burial rites, people followed a strict set of rules concerning the segmentation and placement of skeletal remains within these shaft tombs and concerning the construction of ritual space and commemorative place.

An examination of the grave goods, especially in relation to the spatial distribution of goods across the cemetery, and to the types (such as numbers of males, females, or subadults) of individuals accompanying certain types of goods, demonstrates complex, simultaneous patterns of ambiguity and marked differences.³ For instance, in the analysis of the spatial distribution of males, females, and subadults within single-shaft tombs, as well as between shaft tombs across the entire cemetery, there is an interesting pattern of ambiguity (Chesson and Kuijt n.d.). Analysis of the aged and sexed skeletons shows no spatial patterning of preferential location in the cemetery based on sex or age of adult men and women or age of subadults.⁴ Furthermore, the analysis of the aged and sexed individuals in association with different classes of objects, and their burial across space in the cemetery, also demonstrates no clear patterns of association. Men, women, and children of all ages were buried with multiple variations of the full range of artifact classes and materials, reinforcing the pattern of ambiguity that we see in terms of who is buried with whom and with what types of objects.

At the same time, the analysis of certain classes of artifacts, particularly ceramic vessels, stone vessels, maceheads, and figurines, demonstrates clear patterns of co-occurrences within tomb groups, and within tombs themselves (Chesson and Kuijt n.d.). For example, higher numbers of ceramic vessels do not necessarily co-occur with higher numbers of other types of artifacts (Table 8.2). For instance, the tombs A77, A78NE, and A80N all contained some of the highest concentrations of ceramic vessels per individual, but contained no maceheads, figurines, or stone vessels. On the other hand, there is a tendency for higher concentrations of maceheads to be accompanied by higher concentrations of stone vessels. Seven of the thirty-seven chambers in Group IV shaft tombs contained higher concentrations of both maceheads and stone vessels (Table 8.2). While there are numerous tombs with a stone vessel and lacking a macehead (and vice versa), these seven chambers contain higher numbers proportionally of maceheads and stone vessels within Group IV tombs.

Table 8.2. Groups of EB IA shaft tombs at Bab edh-Dhra'

Group	Tombs	MNI	CV/I	M/I	F/I	SV/I
I	A81E, A81N, A81S, A81W, A82E, A82SE, A82SW, A85, A86SW, A86SE, A86NE, A89SE, A89NE, A89NW, A91, A92	31	8.53	0.18	0.0	0.37
III	A5E, A5S, A6N, A6E, A7E, A7S	16	14.42	0.0	0.75	0.58
IV	A65S, A65E, A65W, A67N, A67E, A68N, A68E, A68SE, A68W, A69, A70, A71S, A71N, A71W, A72NE, A72NW, A72S, A75, A76E, A76W, A77, A78NW, A78NE, A78SW, A78SE, A79N, A79S, A79W, A79E, A80N, A80S, A80W, A80E, A100S, A100E, A100W	133	8.2	0.11	0.02	0.15
VII	A9, A10, A110NE, A110NW, A110SE, A111W, A112S, A112N/1, A112N/2, A112E, A112W, A113, A114N	38	7.97	0.05	0.01	0.17
VIII	C1, C2, C3, C5, C6, C11	15	10.2	0.16	0.0	0.16
TOTAL	All tombs and chambers	233	9.87	0.1	0.17	0.29

MNI: Minimum number of individuals

CV/I: Number of ceramic vessels per individual

MH/I: Number of maceheads per individual

FG/I: Number of figurines per individual

SV/I: Number of stone vessels per individual

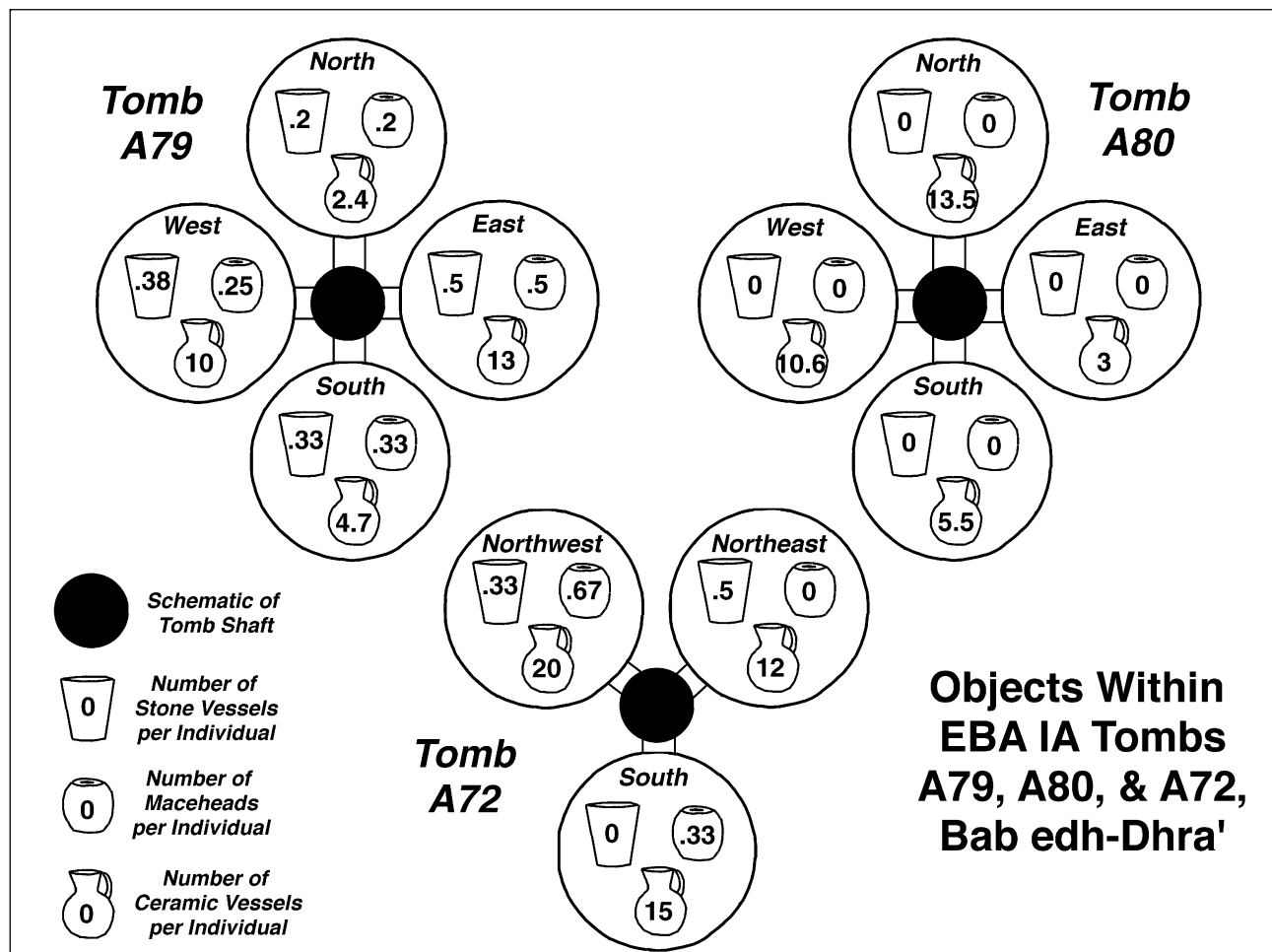


Figure 8.3. Comparison of objects within EB IA Tombs A79, A80, and A72 at Bab edh-Dhra'.

Table 8.3. Individuals and grave goods in EB IA shaft tombs in Group IV, Bab edh-Dhra'

Tomb	MNI	CV	CV/I	MH	MH/I	FG	FG/I	SV	SV/I
A65S	1	17	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
A65E	2	12	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
A65W	5	13	2.6	1	0.2	0	0	1	0.2
A67E	4	10	2.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
A67N	4	10	2.5	0	0	0	0	1	0.25
A68N	2	23	11.5	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
A68E	?	28	?	2	?	0	?	2	?
A68S	3	19	6.33	0	0	0	0	1	0.33
A68SE	2	23	11.5	1	0.5	0	0	1	0.5
A68W	5	24	4.8	0	0	0	0	2	0.4
A69	5	25	5	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
A70	4	6	1.5	0	0	0	0	1	0.25
A71S	6	46	7.67	1	0.17	0	0	0	0
A71N	3	24	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
A71W	10	57	5.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
A72NE	2	24	12	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
A72NW	3	60	20	2	0.67	0	0	1	0.33
A72S	3	45	15	1	0.33	0	0	0	0
A75	4	28	7	0	0	0	0	1	0.25
A76E	3	20	6.67	1	0.33	0	0	0	0
A76W	3	18	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
A77	1	31	31	0	0	0	0	0	0
A78NW	4	21	5.25	0	0	0	0	0	0
A78NE	2	28	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
A78SW	4	21	5.25	1	0.25	2	0.5	0	0
A78SE	?	29	?	1	?	2	?	0	?
A79N	5	12	2.4	1	0.2	0	0	1	0.2
A79S	3	14	4.67	1	0.33	0	0	1	0.33
A79W	4	40	10	1	0.25	0	0	1	0.25
A79E	2	26	13	1	0.5	0	0	1	0.5
A80N	2	27	13.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
A80S	4	22	5.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
A80E	2	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
A80W	5	53	10.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
A100S	7	8	1.14	0	0	0	0	0	0
A100E	10	34	3.4	0	0	3	0.3	1	0.1
A100W	4	23	5.75	0	0	0	0	0	0

MNI: Minimum number of individuals

CV: Number of ceramic vessels

MH: Number of maceheads

FG: Number of figurines

SV: Number of stone vessels

CV/I: Number of ceramic vessels per individual

MH/I: Number of maceheads per individual

FG/I: Number of figurines per individual

SV/I: Number of stone vessels per individual

When different classes of remains in chambers within single tombs are compared, several different patterns emerge in terms of quantities of goods. Several tombs demonstrate an overall similarity of the types and numbers of goods buried in all the chambers, while others demonstrate a marked differentiation within a single tomb system (Figure 8.3, Table 8.3). Additionally, certain tomb groups consistently contain greater numbers proportionally of the different artifact classes. Examination of the tombs in Group IV (Figure 8.1, Table 8.3), the largest grouping of shaft tombs in Cemetery A, shows that Tomb A79 contains four chambers (A79N, A79S, A79W, and A79E). All four chambers in A79 display a similarity in terms of types of objects: each chamber holds ceramic vessels, one macehead, one stone vessel, and no figurines. Additionally, Tomb A79 proportionally contains one of the highest concentrations of these artifact types (Table 8.3). In comparisons of the four chambers of Tomb A80 (A80N, A80S, A80W, A80E), we see another tomb group in which the chambers demonstrate a high level of similarity. All four chambers of A80 contain ceramic vessels, but no maceheads, figurines, or stone vessels. Finally, there are several tomb groups that display a high degree of difference among chambers. For example, three of the four chambers of Tomb A72 (A72NW, A72NE, and A72S) demonstrate a marked degree of variation in terms of numbers of ceramic vessels, stone vessels, maceheads, and figurines. In comparing the tombs within Group IV, it is clear that certain tombs consistently contain higher concentrations of ceramic and stone vessels and maceheads, while others display a marked differentiation in presence and absence of some artifact types. I argue that these patterns of difference and similarity reflect EB IA peoples' use of material culture to construct, assert, and nego-

tiate group and individual identities in a commemorative space. In turn, these different identities may have indicated differential access to craft or prestige goods (ceramic and basalt vessels, stone maceheads, and figurines), or to varying levels of authority within the living community.

Regardless of the significance of these different patterns, what is clear from the data is that within this place of commemoration, people employed material culture to adorn the bodies and tombs of the dead, and potentially the bodies of the living as well. Numerous anthropologists have discussed bodily adornment in the context of mortuary ritual, and in these cases ethnographers have tied the dressing of the bodies of the living and the dead to the performative aspects of asserting an identity (Feeley-Harnik 1989; George 1996; Joyce 1998, this volume; Kan 1989; Metcalf and Huntington 1991; Weiner 1976). George (1996:144) deftly sums up the use of adornment:

Worn on and around the contours and features of the body, adornment opens up a radiant and stylized surface where the strivings of self and community become fused. No mere aesthetic frill, adornment is key to the politics of envy and emulation.

As George notes, people adorn themselves to assert individual and group identities, to be noticed, to be envied, and even to inspire. If we return to the case of Bab edh-Dhra', virtually all tombs contain material culture, including ceramic vessels, beads from costume ornaments, stone vessels, ceramic figurines, wooden objects (staves, bowls, tools, and other unidentified objects), and stone maceheads. Every shaft tomb has a unique collection of these items, differing in quality and quantity. So what kind of identities could they be asserting?

It is difficult for us to witness the assertion of specific individual identities in communal burials. However, when we take George's suggestion to heart and consider both the commemorated and the commemorating, we can see that the people participating in the burial rites were cognizant of the goods placed with the newest addition to the shaft tomb, and perhaps also remembered those goods from earlier ceremonies that were still housed in the shaft tomb. Likewise, these people likely adorned their bodies with jewelry, textiles, hairstyles, and other objects during their travels to and from the cemetery and during the rites themselves. Mortuary ceremonies offer a powerful arena in which people assess the political and financial status of others while they themselves are assessed, and adornment is a key factor in this process (Weiner 1976:61). In the mortuary ceremonies at Bab edh-Dhra', people adorned the bodies of the living and

the dead to assert and negotiate individual identities. With the memories provided by the rich tapestry of colors, textiles, objects, actions, and rituals included in present and past rites, EB IA people crafted and (re)presented social memories of the past, the present, and the future (George 1996:192–93).

Furthermore, I suggest that the communal nature of burials in shaft tombs reflects, even myopically, the assertion of group identities. I believe that we can approach this question from two basic scales: kin groups—potentially family units—and subregions. If families returned to the same place, to the same shaft tomb, year after year, to bury their dead, this repeated action itself creates an identity and reinforces social memories similar to those seen in the maintenance of family crypts and mausoleums in many cities today, with New Orleans being a famous example with its raised cemeteries and ornate family crypts. Additionally, the similarities of types and quantities of goods buried with the dead in several of the tombs in Group IV (for example, tombs A79 and A80) suggest that people crafted and asserted an understanding of a kin relationship, and thus a group identity, by maintaining a set of guidelines in burying their dead kinspeople. In the same vein, the analysis of Group IV tombs demonstrates a marked difference between tomb groups in terms of quantities of goods. It may be that these differences indicate marked social differentiation of people in life, suggesting that the EB IA communities contained kin groups with varying access to craft and trade goods, and potentially to authority and power. Burying the dead in a particular shaft tomb, and employing specific combinations of items, created a strong association with that location within the cemetery, a social memory of a particular kin group who always used the same tomb for their dead, and a reflection of the social differentiation of kin groups within the community.

With no settlement data at Bab edh-Dhra' in the EB IA, we have to assume that the people traveled to the cemetery from elsewhere. In her analysis of the survey data from the Kerak Plateau and the southeastern Dead Sea Plain, Steele (1990) suggests that there were strong economic, and possibly political, ties between the adjacent regions during the urban period. In her examination of the distribution of Plateau EB I sites, she argues that there are two distinct sets of sites on the Plateau, a northern group and a southern group. It may be that these groups buried their dead within distinct areas within the Bab edh-Dhra' cemetery, as a way of distinguishing each subregion from the other. Examination of the distribution of tombs in the cemetery, however, does not provide conclusive evidence of this practice (Table 8.3).

While the largest cluster of shaft tombs (Group IV) contains the greatest number of tombs (14, with 37 chambers and 133 individuals), another distinct cluster of a similar size and magnitude does not exist. Cemetery C (Group VIII), with six tombs and fifteen individuals, does not provide a complementary set of tombs on the same scale as the Group IV tombs in terms of numbers of tombs, chambers, and individuals. Alternatively, it may be that only one group, northern or southern, buried their dead at Bab edh-Dhra'; if this were the case, then one element of their identity may have been tied to and expressed by the place they buried their dead. Researchers in the southern Ghor identified a complementary EB I cemetery at the site of Safi', within easy walking distance of Bab edh-Dhra' (Schaub and Rast 1989; Steele 1990). While that cemetery was identified through extensive looting and has not been systematically excavated and published (McQuitty, personal communication, 1996), it may be that inhabitants of each of the subregions on the Kerak Plateau distinguished themselves partly in where they buried their dead, at Bab edh-Dhra' or Safi'.

Thus far, this discussion of material culture and burial practices has emphasized artifactual differences that may indicate the expression of social differentiation, in terms of individual, kin, or regional identities and the creation of social memories of those differences. However, as shown when the assemblages are examined for patterns of similarities, several elements of EB IA mortuary practices at Bab edh-Dhra' also indicate definitive guidelines for the treatment of skeletal remains of the dead (Rast 1999). While individuals and kin groups may have asserted identities and memories with the types and numbers of objects they placed within the tomb chamber, the vast majority of EB IA tombs follow a general set of guidelines: the body of the deceased was segmented in the secondary rites, with specific elements separated or grouped in the chamber (Figure 8.2). Skulls were always placed together to the left of the chamber. Postcranial elements, especially long bones, were deposited on a woven mat in the center of the chamber. Often people lined up the skulls along the margin of the mat. To the right of the mat, and to the right of the entrance, the people set the grave goods.

Several ethnographers have documented how mortuary practices often embody the most conservative or traditional aspects of ritual action in many societies (Jing 1996; Kan 1989). For example, in his examination of the Tlingit potlatch, Kan (1989:294) argues that mortuary rites, tied as they are to ancestors and the past, are more likely to be maintained through the generations.

At the same time, George (1996:192–93) notes that all rituals can be reworked over time, but even those involving invented or reinvented elements are tied expressly to the past. Rites of commemoration evoke the past, often with the goal of comfortably situating the community and its members in the known present and the unknowable future.

If we take this perspective in viewing the strong patterning in the treatment of the skeletal remains and the placement of material culture and individuals in the chambers, then we begin to glimpse another element of the EB IA identity in the region. On a regional scale, the people who buried their dead at Bab edh-Dhra' in the pre-urban period all followed a particular set of standards in their mortuary rites, forging a sense of similarity between people in this region, as well as nurturing a sense of tradition in the treatment of their dead. These communities shared a set of principles and local knowledge that instructed them how to treat their dead, where to commemorate them, and the importance of maintaining these practices. This knowledge, and the resulting practices, may reflect a regional identity, tied to the south-eastern Dead Sea Plain and to a set of rituals performed within a rich tapestry of memories of individuals, kin groups, and regional communities, which created the foundation of the later EBA urban society.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have endeavored to demonstrate the efficacy of approaching archaeological data from mortuary behaviors through the lens of ethnography. In particular, I argue that we enrich our understanding of past mortuary practices by paying close attention to how people create and maintain social memories of the past, present, and future in these commemorative places. Mortuary rites provide an arena for reaffirming and strengthening social, economic, and political bonds between individuals and groups, asserting group and individual identities, and creating social memories of how life was in the past, and in turn positing ideas about how life should be in the future (George 1996:144; Weiner 1976). The participation of the living and the dead in funerary rites in a specific place shaped a more or less inclusive set of identities and memories of life in the EB IA and later periods at Bab edh-Dhra'. When we focus on social memories and identities in the context of a commemorative place, the material remains of mortuary ceremonies at Bab edh-Dhra', although distant from us in time and space, provide us with a tantalizing view of enduring structures of social organization and

identities during the earliest development of urban culture in the southern Levant.

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Notes

1. The Early Bronze Age chronology at Bab edh-Dhra' (Bentley 1987; Schaub and Rast 1984:36) is as follows:

EB IA: c. 3150–3050 B.C. (period may begin earlier than 3150 B.C. [Schaub and Rast 1984:36])

EB IB: 3050–2950 B.C.

EB II–III: 2950–2300 B.C.

EB IV: 2300–2150 B.C.

For the purpose of this paper, the EB IA is the pre-urban period at the site, for which the excavators have found no evidence of habitation in or around the site. The period of urbanism extends from the transition of the EB IB to EB II through the end of the EB III at Bab edh-Dhra'.

2. Steele's (1990) analysis, based on survey data, does not distinguish between EB IA and EB IB sites and assemblages.

3. The excavators at Bab edh-Dhra' divided all EBA tombs into groups, depending upon location in the cemetery, as well as assigned a time period (Schaub 1981:fig. 1). Most of these groupings reflect a physical cluster of tombs from any particular period, and for this reason I have maintained the groupings as a way of sampling within the overall population. Figure 8.1 illustrates the groups noted in this study. Many tombs were dropped from the analysis because of a lack of published information, or because of their compromised state of preservation, most often resulting from pothunting.

4. This study combines data from excavations at the site during two separate periods, the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s through 1980s. Because of the premature death of Paul Lapp, the director of the earlier excava-

tions, not all of the skeletal remains have been analyzed, sexed, and aged by a physical anthropologist. Thus only a small percentage of the EB IA skeletons can be discussed in terms of age and sex of individuals. Physical anthropologists assigned sex to approximately twenty-two percent (51 of 233) of the EB IA population (Frohlich and Ortner 1982; Rast and Schaub 1981; Schaub and Rast 1989); of these individuals a small percentage of the group has also been assigned an age at death. Additionally, twenty-six percent (61 of 233) of the skeletal population has been aged as subadults (approximately 16 years of age or younger, including neonates).

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“To Dare to Wear the Cloak of Another Before Their Very Eyes”: State Co-optation and Local Re-appropriation in Mortuary Rituals of Central Madagascar

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No one can stay if suffering [from illness, disease, injury, etc.] within the walls of the Palace of Tananarive, except the sovereign. (authors' translation of Rabe as quoted in Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:2–3, n. 4)

As soon as one of the residents of the palace is ill, with the exception of the sovereign, there is haste to carry her/him outside of the [royal] compound. (authors' translation of Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:511, appendix 6)

As we were discussing the tomb of the village founder that sits in the middle of the village, the elderly mpanandro (or ritual specialist) directed our attention to the house that lies just to the east of this tomb. He said that if an individual were lying gravely ill or injured in that house and was near death, it was imperative to remove that individual from the house so that the founder's tomb would not be contaminated by death. (Field notes, “Maroandriana,” Imerina, June 1993)

Hegemony” is a powerful concept (Williams 1977:108–14) to help us understand the aggressive, the insidious, and the stifling aspects of the co-optation of local practice and belief by the ruling elite of both indigenous and foreign states. The “symbolic efficaciousness” (Augé 1974) of local practice and belief, however, draws our attention to the fact that such co-optation is neither facile nor straightforward (Kus and Raharijaona 2000). Yet, an appreciation of the nature of the foundations of local knowledge and the recreation of such systems of knowledge in the hands of local ritual specialists, who are not in ideological service to the state, further allows us to begin to understand how struggle, retort, and recuperation of the hegemonic story line also constitute a possibility.¹

In the discussion that follows these arguments are put into the context of Merina mortuary practices from the sixteenth century through the present in the central

highlands of Madagascar. This period witnessed the consolidation of the Merina state, the French imposition of colonial rule in Madagascar, and the creation of an independent island-wide Malagasy state. It is hoped that these venturings of archaeologists into the domains of ethnography and ethnohistory will challenge us archaeologists, in particular, to loosen the hermetic theoretical seal of our prosaic vocabulary of hegemonic co-optation and local resistance, so as to better appreciate the poetics of human practice; in this case, to better appreciate the metaphoric entailments and leaps involved in the creation and recreation of cultural meaning through performance and material culture.

Themes of a Philosophy of Life and Death

Life is to be fostered, for “life is dear/sweet” (*mamy ny aina*), the Malagasy say. “Death asks no pardon” (*tsy*

ivalozana ny fahafatesana), they also say. Yet, death needs to be contained within its proper domain for, despite its inevitability, the slippage between life and death across tropes in word and deed demands vigilance to be avoided.² The rural Merina (see Figure 5.1), a rice-growing, cattle-raising group of the central highlands of Madagascar, like most non-Western peoples, are too complex and too subtle to view life and death in terms of a simple opposition. They recognize that "death is no sign of guilt, and life is no proof of innocence" (*fahafatesana tsy heloka; havelomana tsy hitsiny*) (Houlder 1960:182).

Certainly, the interface of life and death can be seen clearly at moments as when the newly deceased leaves through the wooden door [of the house] to enter through the stone door [of the tomb] (*ka hivoaka amin'ny varavarana-kazo, dia hiditra amin'ny varavaram-bato*). As an often-cited proverb says: In life, one house; in death, one tomb. The intertwining of the affairs of the living and the deceased is seen in daily activities. As one looks out over the landscape, one sees the irrigated rice fields brought into production through the efforts of the ancestors. One also sees the villages they named and settled on prominences now encircled below by the contemporary villages of their descendants. Their communal tombs, scattered on slopes outside villages or running down the central avenues in other villages, establish the claim of their descendants to land and marriage partners. Their descendants' observance of the taboos they established and their descendants' almost daily supplications in prayer and ritual are said to bring guarantees of health, fertility, wealth, and well-being to the community.

The forces that affect the lives of the Merina (as well as other Malagasy) are not evenly distributed in space and time. Not all moments of days, weeks, months, and years, and not all places, are equivalent for the Merina as they might often seem to those accustomed to acquiescence to the authority of timepieces, maps, and metrics. As s/he moves through the days of life the average rural Merina comes to understand the general outline of the poetics of the intertwining of fates and forces and their practical entailments for action/living. Most everyone, as s/he moves into young adulthood, knows, and can even recite, the outlines of a world view that assigns libations and prayers to the ancestors and seats for honored guests and elders to the north and northeast in the domestic space, and that arranges female activities of water storage and food preparation, as well as the places of poultry and youngsters, in the south and southwest. As concerns the events that break the rhythm of the quotid-

ian, the minimal metaphoric entailments of gestures, timing, words, and places are also understood: guests to new houses are invited to eat rice, milk, and honey; the newly born and the newly wed are placed near the central pillar of the house; foundations for new houses are completed before noon; burials are not to begin until the sun starts its decline; and one does not cut one's hair or nails during the night for that is to bring confusion with the dead who are so prepared for burial. It is a relatively straightforward poetry for the novice poet, and for the more tone-deaf it is a prosaic recitative of exhortations and prohibitions. But moments erupt into the routine, inaugural moments in particular, such as building new tombs and houses, and choosing dates for marriages and circumcisions. Such moments demand the attention of a specialist, a *mpanandro*, whose title might be translated as "Maker of Days." This is a title that refers to the ability to understand the various factors, including astrological factors, that influence destinies (*vintana*). It takes a specialist to work through and remove the entanglements (*manala saritaka*) (Rusillon 1914:103) of the forces of destiny. Some of the skill of the *mpanandro* is a gift from the ancestors, often revealed in dreams. But it is ultimately an art that takes years of preparation, living with and learning from the seasons and the heavens, the landscape, and life experiences. The transcendent order of the world can be revealed in concrete symbols that surround human beings; however, the appreciation of that order is anything but trivial and not always immediately accessible to all individuals. Herein lies the talent of the *mpanandro*: to go beyond simple or formulaic oppositions in order to effectively construct a "whole" (e.g., Fernandez 1986) whose core contains elements that are both complementary and contrasting. And so with life and death as parts of the whole, *mpanandro* know how to metaphorically arrange and metonymically align additional pieces of the whole (such as elements of the landscape, cardinal directions, plants and trees, gestures, persons, temporal and celestial rhythms) so as to foster life and contain death (see also Kus and Raharijaona 1990; Raharijaona and Kus this volume).³

The Viability of a World View and the Resilience of Tradition

The critical point to be spelled out for the present discussion is that *mpanandro* continuously recreate a system of local knowledge within a concrete geographical, social, and historical context of sensuous human practice. This system of local knowledge is not a simple academic exercise involving a handful of abstract binary

oppositions. It is a continuing and resilient tradition allowing, if not demanding, syncretic links be forged to off-island traditions such as the Christian Biblical tradition and Western systems of knowledge. Thus the milk and honey served at the joyous occasion of the inauguration of a new house are given additional significance by the Old Testament, and the empirical knowledge of seasonal winds and rudiments of Western building techniques are woven into the “entanglements” of fates and forces. No wonder it is said that one needs gray/white hair (*mipibolo*) to be a *mpanandro*.

Augé (1974, 1982) has spoken of “symbolic efficaciousness” (*efficacité symbolique*) to direct our attention to the fact that the world views of non-Westerners are not only found to be satisfying systems of philosophical reflection, but they are systems of meaning that “effect” action as well. Such action, in the case of *mpanandro* practices, is anything but trivial or automatic. As we learned in the field, there have been instances in which the hubris of individuals, coupled with the mistakes of *mpanandro* in the construction of houses and tombs, led to drama and in some cases tragedy. There was a new house that had been built, and before inauguration, the wife of the household fell seriously ill. A second ritual specialist brought in to offer advice said that it was an open question as to which would succumb first, the wife or the roof of the house, for the house sat in the path or flyway of flocking birds (*fihoaram-borona*). Fortunately, the roof caved in and the wife recovered. There was also the case of the tomb left empty (*fasam-poana*); it had to be abandoned after the senior male who commissioned the tomb died during its construction. The *mpanandro*, who died shortly afterward, aligned its opening incorrectly. Rather than opening onto a “solid” boulder-strewn hillside nearby, the entrance to the tomb “opened onto the head of a valley before which the tomb’s entrance was powerless [to avoid continually attracting death to it].”⁴

There is a viability to a world view anchored not only in ritual practice and in collective memory, but also in the localized concreteness and sensuousness of human experience both joyous and perilous; a force to a system of local knowledge continuously recreated and put into practice by experts whose gift from the ancestors they are morally obligated to share with the family and community even at the risk of their own health and well-being. The co-optation of such a system of local knowledge by a larger hegemonic structure is neither straightforward nor inevitable. But co-optation is possible (see also Kus and Raharijaona 2000). Also possible is the reverse: acceptance and, in some cases, reworking

of the hegemonic story line. It is part of how history proceeds by prosaic coups and poetic re“coup”erations. Let us look at Merina burial practices then to make this last point of “re‘coup’eration” clearer.

The Practice and the “Non-Practice” of Secondary Burials

Bloch’s work *Placing the Dead*, which discusses the practice of secondary burial (*famadihana*) among the Merina, is well known to scholars in anthropology and archaeology. More recently educational films and popular articles written for those interested in exotic geography and culture have presented various portrayals of this practice, including macabre scenarios replete with skulls and bones, as well as drinking, music, and dance. During the austral winter, with respite from agricultural activity and with authorization from the state, there is a season between July and September when it is common to see *famadihana* processions along the main roads of Imerina (and the adjoining regions of the Voninongo and the Vakinankaratra). Sometimes these processions include buses hired to transport participants inside and bier(s) draped in white outside on top, with the red, white, and green of the Malagasy flag flying alongside. There is some general agreement that the term *famadihana* comes from the root word *vadika*. Among the meanings of the term *vadika* is the sense of “other side” or “the reverse.” *Famadihana* has been popularly translated as the “turning over” of the dead. Grandidier and Grandidier (1917:366, n. 2) say that traditionally care was taken to replace the rewrapped bones of the ancestors so that they lay on the opposite side from which they had lain previously. (Molet [1979, 2:278] points out, however, that the dead are usually buried on their backs.) The core features of *famadihana* are that an extended family participates in the removal of ancestral bones from a communal tomb, in their rewrapping in new burial shrouds, and in their subsequent replacement in the same communal tomb or their transport to and interment in a new communal tomb. Also involved in this occasion, which is considered a joyous occasion, is a substantial outlay of expense for a band of musicians, food for numerous guests, new shrouds, tomb renovation (or in some cases, new construction), and so on.

While *famadihana* are quite popular today in practice in the highlands of Madagascar and common to the contemporary popular imagination of visitors to Madagascar, there are qualifications of this custom. Not all Malagasy, and not even all highland groups, practice the *famadihana* (e.g., Firaketana 1948). For instance, some

Betsileo groups (see Figure 5.1) say they do not practice *famadihana*.⁵ Other Betsileo, especially in speaking with non-Betsileo, use this term from the Merina dialect as a gloss for local practices that either involve some aspects of returning to ancestral tombs the bones of individuals who died and were subsequently buried outside their home territory, or involve the rewrapping of an ancestor's bones as a recognition of a favor specifically asked for and granted. Such practices bear different names in the local dialect.⁶ Clearly, the widespread use of the Merina term *famadihana* groups together a series of practices across the island's interior whose local variations merit more serious attention to bring out not only the nuances of practices, but also the nuances of difference in symbolic significance and world view. For the intentions of this paper, whose focus is on central Imerina, there are two qualifications on the practice of the *famadihana* in this region that are important for the discussion that follows. First, according to several sources (e.g., Firaketana 1948; Molet 1979; Raison-Jourde 1991) this custom, *in its present form*, is of recent origin, dating perhaps to the deposing of the Merina dynasty and the implantation of French invasion forces (late 1890s). Second, even among the Merina not all groups practice the custom of *famadihana*, in particular, groups that maintain traditions of noble status above a certain rank. (Such class differences, while popularly adhered to, are not officially recognized by the contemporary Malagasy state.) This contemporary custom with its variation in practice and, more important for our discussion, in "non-practice" can be understood, in part, in terms of a history of interaction between local custom and state ideology and practice.

A Bit of History: Co-optation of Local Rituals by the State

According to the royal oral traditions of Imerina, "The Histories of the Sovereigns" (*Ny Tantara ny Andriana*) (Callet 1908), it was common practice among the Merina in early times to bury the dead where they died, whether close to home or in a distant territory, in an individual grave. Then at a certain time the bones of the dead were returned to the communal tomb, *famerenana taolam-balo*, for land and family were bound together: "In life, one house; in death, one tomb." Not to find final rest in the family tomb was and still is considered to be a great tragedy. According to Molet (1979, 2:294–95), in early times as well, times before the foundations of the Merina state in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, the ancestors and their descendants were the focus of a New Year's ceremony. (Part of Molet's

[1956] argument for the antiquity of this custom is the existence and similarity of such celebrations across a number of the groups of the island.) The New Year was a time to celebrate marriages and announce divorces, to rupture past engagements and to finalize new agreements (Molet 1979, 1:247). This ceremony also involved an annual return of the extended family to the "great" family house, ablutions and purification with water (*safo-rano*), a night of lifting of taboos on sexual liaisons, the sharing among family members of preserved meat from cattle sacrificed the previous year (*nofon-kena mitam-pihavanana*), and a gathering at the family tomb (Callet 1908:163; Molet 1956:173). (It would be interesting here to compare themes with practices of family visits to tombs at the Egyptian New Kingdom site of Medina [Meskell this volume].)

Ralambo, an early founding ancestor of the Merina monarchy whose reign is usually placed at the end of the sixteenth century, is credited by oral traditions (e.g., Callet 1908) with the "creation" of the state celebration of the New Year, the *Fandroana*, most often translated in the literature as "Royal Bath." (Molet [1956:60–61] contests this etymology, seeing the word more closely linked to the term for "washing with warm water, cooking.") As Chapus and Mondain (as quoted in Molet 1956:55) point out, Ralambo did not really "invent" the celebration in its entirety and in its complexity. The *Fandroana* celebration of Ralambo, rather, co-opted a number of preexisting traditions, most notably the family-based tradition of New Year's celebration, adding to them the ritual ablution of the sovereign (on the first day of the first month of the New Year of the Malagasy calendar⁷), the acknowledgment of the sanctity of the sovereign through the offering of *hasina*, rendered to the sovereign in the form of uncut silver coins⁸ designated by the same term (obviously contributing to the sovereign's coffers, as Bloch [1983] appreciates), oaths of loyalty to the state, and the sacrifice and distribution of cattle meat by the state. Molet, who has offered the most extensive analysis of this tradition of the *Fandroana*, points out not only the syncretic complexity of the ritual, but its political "cleverness" as well, in remarking:

[The complexity of the Merina ritual is attributable] to the great king Ralambo who in his syncretic spirit [man-aged] not only to amalgamate in a single celebration a number of distinct cults [e.g., agrarian, familial, royal, state], but also to give them an orientation that reinforced royal power. (Authors' translation of Molet 1956:57⁹)

The most renowned of Ralambo's descendants, Andrianampoinimerina (whose period of political reign is usually given as 1787–1817), is popularly hailed and

historically recognized as the successful unifier of the Merina state. The Merina state under his original directives and under his successors eventually came to control two-thirds of the island. By the eighteenth century the Merina *Fandroana* took on national proportions such that “everyone from the King and his court to little boys and little girls played a specific role” (authors’ translation of Molet 1956:10) and the celebration took place simultaneously “in the capital city and in the least of hamlets, in houses and at tombs, [and] at the royal palace” (authors’ translation of Molet 1956:10), as well as at the twelve sacred sites of the heartland of Imerina. As the state expanded beyond the original Merina heartland in the nineteenth century, this celebration expanded as well and was taken to the capitals of newly incorporated territories: into the areas of the Betsileo immediately to the south of Imerina, of the Betsimisaraka and the Sihanaka to the north and east, of the Sakalava all along the west coast, of the Antakarana in the northeast, and of various groups of the southwest (Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:601, appendix 232). Yet, for our discussion it is important not to lose sight of the point that for the Merina, the *local ceremony* of kinship groups linked to the ideology of the annual renewal of the state and the cosmos continued to incorporate the earlier traditional visit of the extended family to the ancestral tombs (Abinal as quoted in Molet 1956:14; Razafimino as quoted in Molet 1956:14) in which according to several sources the old *lamba*, or shrouds, of the deceased were replaced with new ones (Mayeur 1913; Abinal as quoted in Molet 1956:14). For the Merina whose occupations such as political administrators, military personnel, and merchants took them beyond Imerina into other regions of this expanding polity, it was obligatory to return to rejoin their families in Imerina for the celebration of the *Fandroana*, for “*manary fandroana*, ‘to reject the *fandroana*,’ was a capital crime” (authors’ translation of Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:415). (Those whose administrative function retained them were nevertheless obliged to make a return visit when they could [Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:415].) For the Merina, the *Fandroana* continued to co-join and confound issues of the perpetuation of family and ancestral ties with those of loyalty to the state.

Elaboration of State Ideology: “The King Is Not Dead, Long Live the King!”

As the Merina state took ideological and material shape from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century, from the time of Ralambo to that of Andrianampoini-

merina and his successors, the death of the individual sovereign became problematic for the unity, endurance, and continuity of the reified state of Imerina. Anthropologists and historians recognize that this problem of the death of individual sovereigns has been posed and resolved in various fashions by numerous polities. As concerns the Merina, Andrianampoinimerina, with the aid of local ritual specialists and full-time ritual specialists from the east coast of the island who were recruited into the service of the state, reworked themes as well as forged new elements of state ideology to address the problem of the sovereign’s mortality. The “singular” sovereign, who was likened to “The-sun-that-is-not-two” (*Masoandrotsiroa*), was to avoid contamination by “death.” The sovereign, as well as members of the royal family, was never to approach a cadaver (Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:7). No stones used for tombs were to be transported through the capital city and all buildings of the capital were to be of wood, in part as guarantee that this prohibition was followed. Further, as stated in one of the quotes that open this chapter, no individual in a state of agony/pain was allowed to stay within the royal compound, except the sovereign. Yet, when the inevitable happened, when the “The-sun-that-is-not-two” set, it was said that the singular sovereign “turned his/her back” (*miamboho*), for a sovereign does not die. Indeed, there was much to distinguish this “occurrence” from the deaths of all others (Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:44).¹⁰ (See Bloch 1981 for fuller discussion of royal funerary rites.) While the houses of Merina were built with foundations above ground and tombs with foundations below ground, the sovereign’s tomb was built above ground level. While ordinary burials took place with the descent of the day, “The-sun-that-is-not-two” was interred at night. Those nobles whose ceremonial honor it was to lead the procession of delegates in the offerings of first fruits to the sovereign were also responsible for the burial of the sovereign in a singular tomb, not a group or family tomb. This tomb was surmounted by a structure like a miniature house called a “sanctified” or “holy house” (*trano masina*). The heir/ess to the throne did not put on the dress and the coiffure of mourning; indeed, s/he was kept from all contact with his/her “deceased” predecessor. When the new sovereign assumed office it was said that “the sun has newly risen.” The setting of one sun and the rising of the next proclaimed the endurance and the stability of the state as language and gesture disguised/denied the mortality of the sovereign.

Central also to the image of dynamic endurance and stability of both the sovereign and the state was the notion of *hasina*, ineffectively, though most often, trans-

lated as "sanctity." A sovereign's sanctity demanded continued recognition in word and gesture. This recognition took the form of the offering of uncut silver coins, as mentioned above, which was in part convenient for the sovereign's coffers, but also in part these coins were used to create the silver canoe that would act as "coffin" for the sovereign when "s/he turned her/his back." Additional coins were interred with the sovereign. It was said that Andrianampoinimerina was interred with 300,000 silver Spanish piastres (Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:43). The *hasina* of the sovereign, however, was a sanctity that was not diminished, that did not need augmentation. The "completeness" and "perpetuity" of the sovereign's rule and sanctity, confounded with the well-being of the state, were proclaimed in numerous image-laden speeches of Andrianampoinimerina. One striking piece of imagery was Andrianampoinimerina's claim that "the land and the rule" (*ny tany sy ny fanjakana*) belonged to him "at the beginning and in the end" (*ny lohany sy ny farany*).¹¹ The term used to designate "end" (*farany*) invoked additional notions of "final, supreme, highest, and having descendants" (Abinal and Malzac 1970:152–53) and thus invoked temporal, spatial, and social dimensions. The traditional offering to the sovereign of the hump and the rump of sacrificed cattle was a material symbol that was easily made to echo "in the beginning and in the end," among other images (e.g., superior height or rank). The circularity of the solar orb, of uncut silver coins, *hasina*, and of the round stone disks that were used to close the gates of the capital city of Antananarivo (and that date to Andrianampoinimerina's rule according to both oral tradition and archaeology [Gabler 1988; Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:237, n. c; Kus and Raharijaona 1998]) assert even more strongly this image of "completeness" and "perpetuity." Words, material symbols, and ritual gestures, redundantly multiplied, sustained the assertion that the sovereign and the state were singular, dynamic, and enduring in sanctity.

While the sovereign stood above and alone, Andrianampoinimerina encouraged the social solidarity of the population of the Merina heartland and their attachment to the land/state (*ny tany sy ny fanjakana*) by urging them to willingly help each other in the construction of collective tombs of megalithic proportions on ancestral lands (Callet 1908:800). Some like Raison-Jourde (1991) have suggested that collective tombs among the Merina date to this time. Archaeological evidence as well as comparative ethnographic information would argue otherwise. It may be the case, however, that their megalithic form became more typical at this time.

For the present discussion it is the state's encouragement of the building of collective tombs during the reign of Andrianampoinimerina that is of interest.

As was the case for nobles in many early states, certain nobles of Imerina became strong and continuing sustainers of royal privilege, their support enlisted by the state partially through the granting of privileges that forged metaphoric and metonymic links to the sovereign, all the while cleverly stripping most of them of political power (see Bloch 1983 for fuller discussion). Some of these privileges concerned the tombs of such nobles. The tombs of nobles were built within villages, while those of commoners were built outside these confines. According to oral traditions, Andrianampoinimerina further granted to nobles of certain ranks the privilege of building a miniature house on their tombs.¹² While such a miniature house was called a "holy house" (*trano masina*) in the case of the sovereign, it was called a "cold house" (*trano manara*) in the case of nobles, signifying a house without a hearth. Further, these nobles were ordered not to rebury their dead.¹³ Accordingly, the claim was made that their sanctity was intrinsic and demanded no "renewing" through ceremonies of reburial. As Molet (1979, 2:282) also recognizes, their burial within villages in conquered territories where many of them served in administrative roles, rather than the repatriation of their remains to ancestral domains, became part of the sociopolitical strategy of an expanding empire.

The Merina state, however, itself fell victim to the French expansionist state, and the remains of the former Merina sovereigns became part of that other state's ideological game. These remains were transported on March 15, 1897, from the necropolis of the Merina state (Ambohimanga) to the Merina capital, then occupied by colonial forces. These royal remains were "rewrapped" and then "reburied" under the French flag in Antananarivo. It was in the previous year that the last *Fandroana*, or Royal Bath, was celebrated. In subsequent years the Merina adopted (or were forced to adopt) the French national holiday of July 14 (Grandidier and Grandidier 1917:413) and consequently the annual trip back to the family tombs linked to the sovereign's ritual of *Fandroana* was disrupted with the end of the Merina monarchy (Molet 1979, 2:294). It was only after this time, at the beginning of the twentieth century, that the European sources began to make any significant mention of the current practice of *famadihana*, or the "rewrapping" of the ancestors (Graeber 1995:259). It appears then that the loss of a state ritual (i.e., *Fandroana*) that had perpetuated a co-opted local custom (i.e., annual visit to the family tomb and the rewrapping of the ancestors) ush-

ered in a local ritual (i.e., *famadihana*), one both like and unlike the earlier one, a ritual that is still practiced with vigor today.

Much has been written about the *famadihana* and much will continue to be written. An investigation of the literature will show that this contemporary practice of secondary burials follows certain general themes explored in this volume where the secondary burial practices of other populations are discussed; the creation and negotiation of social identities (Schiller this volume) and the reinforcement of social connections and the negotiation of status and authority within such social webs (Kuijt this volume), for example. However, the focus of this chapter is on the *non-practice* of this secondary burial custom in light of the pieces of nineteenth-century Merina state ideology that have been integrated into present-day local knowledge and local practice (especially of ritual specialists) in the rural countryside where we have carried out our fieldwork. Such local knowledge and local practice speak to the issue of the “poetic re‘coup’eration” of pieces of the hegemonic storyline.

Before we proceed to this issue, however, some clarification is needed to distinguish the issue of local knowledge and rural practice from other contemporary uses of the hegemonic story line to sustain contemporary privilege (most notable in the urban context).

History in the Service of Present Privilege

It is common knowledge in the central highlands of Madagascar that today economic and political power and social privilege are unevenly distributed among the Merina according to the ranks of the former social statuses of noble, commoner, and slave. Part of this present inequality is certainly due to the earlier historic material creation of this inequality under the Merina monarchy, but the continuing inequality is sustained by a contemporary ideology that makes historical reference to the official hegemonic story line of the Merina monarchy, particularly in its later elaboration under Andrianampoinimerina and his successors. It is not uncommon today for descendants of former nobles to continue to assert their noble status by undertaking construction of new, and often ostentatious, tombs in the countryside in the territory of their ancestors. In Imerina to know the ancestral territory of an individual is to know that individual’s social class. Territorial and class endogamy have been characteristic of Merina society since at least the time of Andrianampoinimerina. Even descendants of those nobles who had been “planted” by Andrianampoinimerina and his successors in conquered territories, and

who had been told to bury their dead in those territories, continue to sustain ties with ancestral land in Imerina. Young urbanized and westernized “nobles” are often under strong social pressure to contract class endogamous marriage alliances with disinheritance and denial of burial rights in the family tombs as the consequence of “misalliances.” It is not uncommon today to see obituary announcements in the newspaper that refer to the deceased as *Ny Andriana* (The Noble), *Andriambavy* (The Noblewoman), or *Andriandahy* (The Nobleman), and one recent announcement even referred to the spouse as *Printsy* (Prince). Such announcements go on to list extended family affiliations (including direct descendants, brothers and sisters of the deceased and their offspring, and brothers and sisters of the spouse and their offspring) and to note territorial affiliation by indicating where the burial is to take place. Perhaps even more troubling is that some scholars who are descendants of former nobles have coined the term *andrianité* in their explorations (most often far from neutral) of the philosophy and history of Merina class privilege, and others among them have taken to using former terms of differential address among themselves such as *Tsara ve, tompoko* (Are you well, sir/madame) and *Mandrosoa Hasina* ([May your] sanctity [continue to] develop). The material and social privileges of such contemporary “nobles” are sustained through the same contemporary means of economic and sociopolitical workings that sustain privilege in numerous other societies, but they are further buttressed by reference to customs and labels from a partial and privileged version of history.

One telling example of this last point is particularly relevant to our present discussion of the contemporary practice and “non-practice” of the *famadihana*. On November 6, 1995, the Rova, or Merina royal compound including its various palaces and the tombs of the Merina sovereigns at Antananarivo, was burned, a tragedy of no small proportion. It will be remembered from the above discussion that the royal tombs at this site became the repositories of the remains of the Merina sovereigns, including Andrianampoinimerina, when at the end of the nineteenth century French occupational authority forced their disinterment and transfer from Ambohimanga to the Rova at Antananarivo then occupied by the French military command. In the planning for the reconstruction of the Rova after the fire, the issues of the cleaning and rebuilding of the royal tombs and the rituals surrounding these tasks continue to be a central focus for the affiliated descendants of the Merina monarchy (the *Fikambanana Jaky Mena*) since a number of groups, including several administrative divisions and personnel

of the local and federal government, are involved in the planning and eventual execution of rebuilding of the Rova. On September 21, 1998, rituals were carried out at these tombs by some administrative officials as prelude to beginning reconstruction. An announcement in the local newspapers appeared very shortly after (see Figure 9.1). In this announcement the *Jaky Mena*, descendants of the former Merina sovereigns, in essence

condemned this ritual act by making a formal declaration that the rituals surrounding the "funeral" rites and remains of those sovereigns are of an order different from those of other individuals; indeed the ones carried out that day were akin to a *famadihana*, a practice they said should never take place with royal remains. This maintenance of ritual distinction for the former sovereigns and their descendants finds resonance in the contempo-

FANAMBARANA

RA..... R
RA..... J
RA... RA... C
RA... RA... H
RA... RA... C
RA... RA... J [names of individuals]

Antananarivo faha 23 Septambra 1998

Ho an'ny Fikambanana Jaky Mena

Izahay taranaky RA..... izay nafenina ao amin'ny Fitomiandalana ary taranaky RADAMAMANJAKA vadin-dRANGITA Razambenay dia manao izao fanambarana izao mikasika ny fihetsiketsehana teny Anatirova ny Alatsinainy faha-21 ny volana Septambra 1998: Tsy ankasitranahanay ny fanaovana ireny fihetsiketsehana ireny, indrindra ny fomba natao. Izahay mianakavy rahateo tsy nanatrika teny noho ny ahiahinay amin'ny zavatra izay nety hitranga. Aminay taranaka ny sotoavina sy ny fombafomba amin'ny fandrakofana fanindroany ny fasana dia toy ny famadihana ireo Masina razanay izay fomba tsy azo atao mihitsy

Fampatsiahivana:
Raha tadidinareo, tamin'ny nampakarana ny Masina RANAVALONA faha-III dia fanafenana no nitondran'ny mpanjanan-tany ny raharaha izay natao tamin'ny fomba tsotra feno fanajana fa tsy nisy ny sotoavina sy ny fombafomba.

[followed by signatures of the named individuals above]

FORMAL DECLARATION

Addressed to the association Jaky Mena

We the descendants of RA..... "hidden" [buried] in the Fitomiandalana [royal tombs in the Rova] as well as RADAMA-SOVEREIGN spouse of RANGITA our great ancestors hereby make known our concern regarding the confused activities that took place at the Rova on September 21, 1998. We contest the observance of such ceremonies as well as the practice of associated customs. It is not necessary to remind [you] that we were not present [at those ceremonies] because we were concerned about their possible unforeseen consequences. In our eyes, as descendants, the rites used for the recovering of the tombs are equivalent to a *famadihana* of those Sacred ancestors, this being a practice that should never be done.

REMINDER:
Remember, when the body of THE SACRED RANAVALONA III was repatriated by the colonial administration it was a simple "hiding" [burial] filled with honor; there were no accompanying rites and customs.

Figure 9.1. Newspaper announcement decrying rituals practiced within the royal compound of Antananarivo. Midi Madagasikara, no. 4604, page 6, September 29, 1998. Top: Reproduction of the original; bottom: translation.

rary practices of descendants of former nobility of non-royal status. These latter individuals do practice the “rewrapping” and reburial of ancestral remains. However, this is not referred to as *famadihana*. Instead the term *famonosan-damba* (“rewrapping in lamba/cloth”) or *famonosan-drazana* (“rewrapping the ancestors”) is used. (See Figure 9.2 for an example of a formal invitation sent to extended family and friends to participate in such a ceremony.) One explanation given for the differentiation of this practice of “rewrapping the ancestors” from that of “turning over [the ancestors]” is that nobles of a particular rank have a sanctity (*hasina*) that does not diminish. The intent of the latter practice (*famadihana*) is understood, at least by those who do not practice it, to be necessary for the renewal of ancestral *hasina* for those of lower rank now that the Merina monarchy is no longer there to assure well-being at a state level. An additional

explanation is also offered: *tsy mamadika ny andriana*. The root term *vadika* in the term *famadihana* can be translated not only as “to turn over” but also as “to betray.” Consequently the phrase *tsy mamadika ny andriana* can be translated as both “nobility does not practice the famadihana” and “the nobility does not betray.”

From the descendants of the Mayflower, to the Daughters of the American Revolution, to the Daughters of the Confederacy, to British higher and lower nobility, to Merina *andriana* (nobles), not only references to descent but also the use of “distinctions” in practice based on claims of historical “tradition” (e.g., use of titles, rituals, and ritualized protocol) are prosaic assertions of a will to maintain contemporary privilege. What follows, however, is an attempt to show that some of the pieces of the hegemonic story line of the Merina monarchy have become viable elements in ongoing local traditions, have

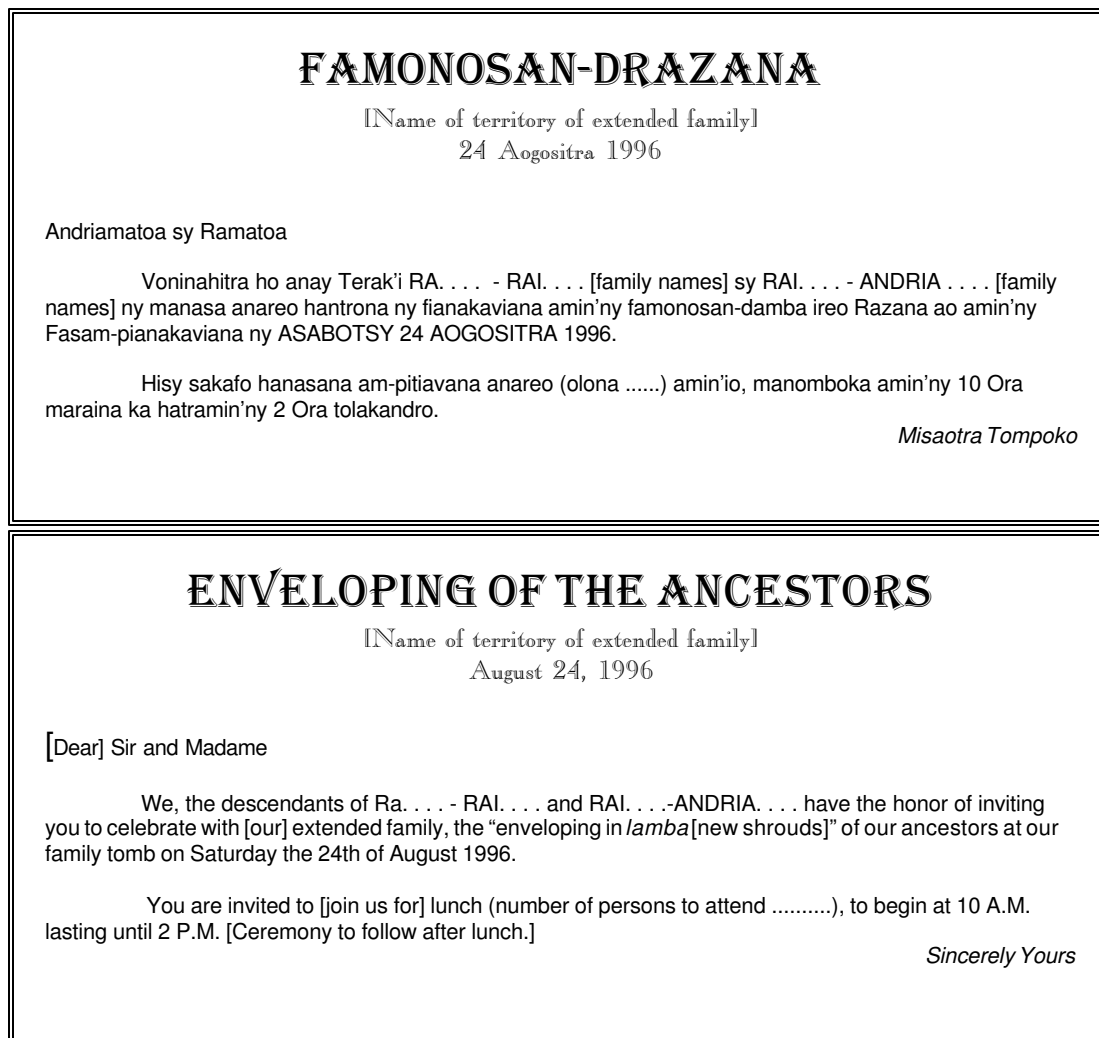


Figure 9.2. Invitation to a “Rewrapping of the Ancestors.” Top: reproduction of original; bottom: translation.



Figure 9.3. Line of tombs running north-south in the center of a village.

been inserted into a much more complicated philosophy, and have even engendered creative elaboration on larger themes such as life and death rather than just the maintenance of social privilege.

Poetic Re“coup”eration of the Official Story Line

In the village of “Maroandriana,”¹⁴ thirty kilometers to the east of the capital city of Antananarivo, one can still see the rounded stone disc (a marker of noble status from the time of Andrianampoinimerina) standing at the northern entrance to the village. These villagers of former noble descent continue to be buried in communal megalithic tombs within the boundaries of the village (Figure 9.3). The founding ancestor of the village, according to oral traditions a companion of the great sovereign Andrianampoinimerina, is buried alone in a tomb centrally located in the village and surmounted by *atrano manara* (“cold house”) with a standing stone (*vato lahy*) accompanying it (Figure 9.4). The local ritual specialist, or *mpanandro*, organizes an annual cleaning of the outside of the tomb and an anointing of the standing stone with cattle grease, the timing of which coincides with appro-

priate cycles of the moon and with reference to the traditional zodiacal calendar (of ultimate Arabic origin). Certainly the ideas of renewal and purification are bound up with this ritual, but it is worth looking more closely at what is considered polluting of this and other tombs in the village to appreciate the underlying philosophy. For instance, the weeds and brush that are cleaned away from the founder’s tomb are not discarded as simple debris, but are deliberately taken to the fields to serve as fertilizer. A casual visitor to the village might wonder not only at the fact that tombs line the main north-south path through the village (Figure 9.3), but also that on these tombs one can see laundry drying, chickens trying to steal some of the rice left to dry, seed casings from eucalyptus trees that are the remnants of children’s games (Figure 9.5), and even children sitting on or walking across them (Figure 9.6). Nevertheless, these tombs must be protected from pollution—pollution in the form of dogs and pigs (the latter are neither to be raised nor eaten within the village bounds and those who have eaten pork outside the village must wash themselves before entering the village) and human wastes. Children who do not have ancestors in the tombs (a euphemism for class distinction) are cautioned from sitting or playing on the



Figure 9.4. Ritual specialist standing near the tomb of the village founder.

tombs as well. The elderly *mpanandro* of the village (Figure 9.4) continues to be a vigilant guardian of such traditions for they ultimately concern the life and well-being of the village community. The tomb of the founder (Figure 9.4), as a critical source of the continued life and well-being, must not only be guarded against ordinary profanation such as being overgrown with weeds or polluted by village refuse, but it must further be protected from contamination by death. As one of the lead quotes of this chapter notes, this means that no individual near death must lie in the house whose door faces the tomb; any such individual must be removed from this residence to another before s/he exhales her/his last breath, a practice that recalls the prohibitions concerning the royal compound under the Merina monarchy. This is certainly a more complex philosophy of pollution and of the relation of life to death than a Westerner might expect.

Several years ago members of the village decided to refurbish the founder's tomb and to rewrap the founder's bones in new cloth. They said they wanted to stage a *famadihana*. The elderly *mpanandro* reminded the villagers that their (noble) group does not practice the *famadihana*. When this first warning went unheeded the

village founder appeared to the *mpanandro* in several dreams, urging the *mpanandro* to make the founder's wishes clear; no "reburial," for the *hasina*, or sanctity, of the founder remains intact.¹⁵ Eventually the *mpanandro*'s words were heeded. The founder of a nearby and related village also did not want his tomb rebuilt or his remains rewrapped. Some villagers, despite knowing of these wishes of that village founder, it is said by local informants, received a sanctioning of illness for persisting in their intentions. They were thus forced to abandon the project.

More recently in August 1998, a tomb within the village of "Maroandriana" was to be reopened to allow the transfer of the remains of a woman, upon the request of her father, to the tomb of her paternal grandfather in another village. She had been buried in the tomb of her paternal grandmother whose natal village was "Maroandriana."¹⁶ Since the tomb to be opened was a communal tomb, a number of villagers decided to use the occasion to "rewrap" the bones of family members buried in the tomb. This action was referred to *asfamono-san-damba* and anyone who inadvertently used the term *famadihana* was corrected immediately, being told that



Figure 9.5. Remnants of a child's game on tomb in foreground and rice drying on tomb in background.

the group does not practice *famadihana*, and in some cases explicitly being told that the *hasina* of the group needs no renewing. There are not only differences of terminology, but also of practice that distinguished this event from *famadihana*. Scholarly (e.g., Bloch 1971; Graeber 1995) and popular literature have made mention of the "violence" attached to the practice of *famadihana*, in particular, the energetic dancing with the ancestral remains and their rough handling in binding them to be replaced in the tomb.¹⁷ In the *famonosandamba* that took place in "Maroandriana" the remains were delicately handled (to the point of not allowing any bit of "dust" to be lost) and only a few individual males were considered skilled or dexterous enough to bind the remains (*mahay mamatotra*) (Figures 9.7 and 9.8).

The sustenance of the community as regards individual lives, group identity, and the generations to come also involves the tomb of the founder. One intriguing example of the clear association of this tomb with individual and group life is the ritual regarding the newly born. On one occasion we watched as an infant, who had been born outside the village of "Maroandriana," was ritually "introduced" into this village, the village of her

father, her village. The *mpanandro* met the newborn infant at the threshold to the northern entryway of stone into the village, for the north is the direction of nobility. At this location the child was blessed in prayers to the ancestors, and candies, as a substitute for the honey of anointment favored by the ancestors, were placed on the entryway. The infant was then taken to the oldest cattle park in the village (no longer in use) and again a blessing was offered by the *mpanandro*. Cattle parks are a major symbol of wealth. Finally, the infant was taken to the tomb of the founder of the village, again she was blessed with words asking for a long, healthy life for herself and many more offspring for her parents, and candies were left as an offering on and near the founder's tomb. All the while that this ceremony was taking place, the immediate participants, including the *mpanandro*, were surrounded by children who teased and pushed each other, who jostled for places climbing on entryways and on tombs, and who scrambled for the candies when the ceremonial acts were completed. The *mpanandro*, when questioned about such "irreverent" activity on the part of the children, said that it was, in fact, good that so many children were present; besides, both ancestors and chil-



Figure 9.6. Children sitting on the tomb of their ancestors.



Figure 9.7. Men "rewrapping" the ancestors.



Figure 9.8. Women holding the “rewrapped” ancestors.

dren are known for their love of sweets. The Malagasy word for "candy" is *vatomamy*, or "sweet stones," and it will be remembered that the Malagasy say, *Mamy ny aina*, or "Life is sweet/dear," to acknowledge their appreciation for this gift.

Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion one can certainly argue that the "noble" status of the rural villagers of "Maroandriana" is maintained in daily and ritual practice and consequently issues of class privilege are not solely the concern of an urban elite. Yet, we would amend that argument to suggest that class is neither the exclusive theme nor the exclusive function of the practices we discussed above. The exegesis of such local knowledge and practice is not that simple; not that straightforward. Involved as well is a complex conundrum of life and death in which some tombs' life-giving ability must even be protected from contamination by suffering and death. This is a practice whose logic owes its seeds to an official state ideology directed at resolving a political conundrum of the mortality of individual sovereigns and the continuity of the state. Yet the local "re'coup'eration" of this seed is fascinating to appreciate.

A number of groups on the island place their tombs in areas far removed from villages and avoid contact with them outside of funeral circumstances. The Betsileo, a highland group to the south of the Merina, had/have class distinctions similar in many ways to those of the Merina and share many other cultural features with the Merina. Yet tombs, even of nobles, are said not to be built within villages. Sometimes this means that it is only a simple path or a small ditch that separates a tomb and a house barely several meters apart, but this is an important boundary nevertheless. This is in marked contrast to the tombs that one sees in certain villages in Imerina, such as "Maroandriana," where tombs are not only within the bounds of a village, but also centrally located and part of the everyday landscape to the point where children are allowed to sit, walk, and play on these "houses" of their ancestors.

There is a vitality to local systems of knowledge that cannot be adequately captured in a simple model of their relationship to state ideology that sees them only in terms of hegemonic co-optation and local resistance. Part of that vitality comes from the serious philosophical engagement and syncretic talents of individuals, especially ritual specialists, who are responsible for the continuous recreation of "tradition." Their syncretic talents include a creative "unpredictability" (to borrow an image from

Fernandez 1986:7) in the use of metaphorical "entailments" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and behavioral tropes (to further borrow vocabulary from Fernandez 1986) in daily life as well as ritual performance, what we referred to above as "poetic re'coup'eration." So in the ceremony surrounding a newborn infant, "sweet stones" (candy) resonate with the stones used to build the entryway to her/his natal village and to build the tombs of her/his ancestors. Their sweetness asserts the continuing theme of Malagasy life, the recognition of its "preciousness" (*mamy ny aina*), for the same term *mamy* indicates both "dearness" and "sweetness." And when these "sweet stones" are offered to the ancestors in seeking their blessings for the continuity of life and the perpetuation of the generations, this supplication finds immediate fulfillment as the lively and vocal presence of children¹⁸ crowds the ritual space of a tomb that must be kept from the profanation of death and suffering.

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We would like to thank Priscilla Keswani and Susan Pollock for inviting us to offer a first draft of this paper at a session entitled "The Social Dynamics of Mortuary Ritual: Archaeological and Ethnological Perspectives" at the annual meetings of the AAA in 1996 in San Francisco. We are also grateful to Rhodes College for continued support of S. Kus in ethnographic and archaeological research over the years, and for the collegial support that the Musée Faniahy of the Université of Fianarantsoa and its director, Mme. Clarisse Rasoamampionona Razafindratsima, have shown us during the past several seasons of fieldwork. Most important, we would like to thank Dadatoalala for his patience and his clarity in explaining the ways of his ancestors and his own practice as a *mpanandro*. Thanks also go to Ralaivao, who explained aspects of Betsileo practice to us. Finally, we thank the anonymous reviewers of our two articles included in this volume for their attentive reading and helpful suggestions.

Notes

1. The phrase quoted in the title of this article is a loose translation of the proverb "*Mitafy lamba Imason-tompony*" (Houlder 1960:108). A second version of this proverb is "*Misarebaka ny lamba Indrana, ka nony tonga endahan'ny tompony*" (Houlder 1960:108). This can be translated as "To put on a cloak/piece of clothing with ostentation, only to arrive and have it stripped from you by the owner." For our purposes in this article, it should

be noted, as well, that the term *lamba* is used both as a generic for “clothing” and as the term to designate “burial shroud.”

2. The choice of vocabulary in this phrasing is a deliberate borrowing from Fernandez 1986.

3. It should be noted that many details of this practice vary between individual *mpanandro* and that there is also variation at a more generalized regional level between Betsileo *mpanandro* and Merina *mpanandro*.

4. *Tsy maharitra sariany ilay lesokan'ny lohasaha ilay varavaram-pasana.*

5. The Betsileo in the region of Ambalavao-Andohoany, where we have carried out several seasons of fieldwork, say they do not practice this custom.

6. E.g., *fati-taolana*, *taolam-balo*, *taola-karaka*, *atidamba*. When official authorization to carry out a “re-wrapping of the ancestors” is sought, the term used on official documentation is *Fangatahan-dalana hanao fahatsiarovana*, which can be translated as “authorization to carry out a commemoration.”

7. Convenient in either fact or perpetuated fiction, this was also the birthday of Ralambo as well as of the great later ruling sovereigns Andriamasinavalona and Andrianampoinimerina. It was a day whose destiny was too strong to bear for any individual other than one destined to greatness.

8. With the introduction of foreign currency to the island, coins were often cut into smaller pieces to create smaller denominations. It was the uncut coin in its circularity, completeness, and singularity that rendered it of a symbolic value beyond its monetary worth.

9. “Le rituel [du Fandroana] le plus compliqué et disparate dont nous ayons le souvenir est celui des Merina qui le doivent sans aucun doute au grand roi Ralambo dont l'esprit syncrétiste sut, non seulement amalgamer en une seule plusieurs fêtes relevant de cultes distincts, mais donner à celle-ci une orientation qui enforçât le pouvoir royal.”

10. There was much also in life to distinguish the sovereign from all others and mark her/his singularity including not only appellations, but also dress, ornamentation, and hairstyle.

11. When the sovereigns referred to their claims to political authority, they spoke of *ny tany sy ny fanjakana*, wherein “the land and the rule” are inseparable in conception as well as in discourse.

12. These were nobles of the rank of *Andriantompokoindrindra* or higher, which included four of the seven recognized groups of nobles.

13. See Graeber (1995) for an example of a noble group that does presently engage in the practice of *famadihana*.

14. Fictitious name.

15. Dreams from the ancestors are often the source of initial decisions to stage *famadihana*. See Graeber (1995:258) for further examples.

16. Several months before her death, the tomb of her paternal grandfather had been opened for another funeral. It was not allowed to reopen that tomb within such a short period. She was buried in her paternal grandmother's tomb as a temporary measure.

17. It is also suggested that the ancestors themselves act in a violent manner toward their descendants, punishing them with illness and other tragedies when taboos are broken or their wishes not respected. In the region of “Maroandriana” it is not the ancestors who are said to be the direct instigators of misfortune, it is rather that neglect of taboos, neglect of ancestors, neglect or disrespect of custom, etc. places one in a situation of offense against the [moral] laws of the universe. The offense or *tsiny* will eventually find retribution or *tody*. Our argument here is not that the other authors are wrong, it is rather that there is much more localized variation in custom and world view than most ethnographic writings on Madagascar would lead one to believe.

18. See Graeber (1995) for a different appreciation of the relationship of ancestors to children in the practice of the *famadihana*.

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MPPNB Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period
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